



CONNECTICUT STATE UNIVERSITY
AMERICAN ASSOCIATION OF UNIVERSITY PROFESSORS

**Testimony of
Vijay Nair, President
Connecticut State University American Association of University Professors
to the
Higher Education and Employment Advancement Committee
February 26, 2015**

PROPOSED BILL 398: AN ACT ASSISTING STUDENTS ACCEPTED INTO THE DEFERRED ACTION FOR CHILDHOOD ARRIVALS PROGRAM WITH THE COST OF COLLEGE

Greetings Senator Bartolomeo, Representative Willis and members of the Higher Education and Employment Advancement Committee. My name is Vijay Nair and I am the President of the Connecticut State University American Association of University Professors. CSU-AAUP is the collective bargaining agent representing 3,100 full-time and part-time faculty, librarians, coaches, and counselors at the four Connecticut State Universities.

I regret that I am unable to be present at today's hearing and thank you for accepting this written testimony in support of Proposed Bill 398. This bill would enable thousands of low-income undocumented Connecticut residents to pursue a college education, which they would not be able to afford without access to financial aid.

Many undocumented students are from low-income families and belong to racial minority groups. Ensuring their access to state financial aid will increase racial and socioeconomic diversity in our colleges and universities. According to figures reported by the Board of Regents, 25% of the 35,000 students enrolled in the four Connecticut State Universities in Fall 2012 (latest figures available) belonged to minority groups¹. Many of these students are the first in their families to go to college. But thousands more are not given the chance because they are barred from access to financial aid under current regulations, including those who are high achieving and at the top of their high school classes.

There is no question that a college degree significantly enhances an individual's employment prospects and earning potential. Providing access to financial aid to undocumented Connecticut residents is an investment in not only their futures, but also in our state's future. This must be done to create an equal playing field, giving all our residents a fair chance to improve their prospects for a successful and more prosperous life.

Passing this bill will also lead to greater tax revenue for Connecticut in the long term and would allow our state to recover the investment already made in these students' K-12 education.

¹ Connecticut Board of Regents Office of Policy and Research. 2013, September. *Fall 2012 Headcount Enrollment by Race/Ethnicity for Connecticut State Colleges & Universities*.

This concept is nothing revolutionary. California, Minnesota, New Mexico, Texas, and Washington all offer state financial aid to undocumented students. It's simply the right thing to do for Connecticut's undocumented residents and for the future of our state.

Thank you for providing me this opportunity to address this important topic and I urge you to support Proposed Bill 398.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Vijay Nair". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Vijay Nair