

# -YALE COLLEGE- DEMOCRATS

Testimony of Alissa Wang  
Legislative Captain, Yale College Democrats

02/24/16  
198 Elm Street, B21  
New Haven, CT 06511

In favor: S.B. 147  
An Act Assisting Students without Legal Immigration Status with the Cost of  
College.

I don't believe that any member of this chamber would, under any circumstances, tell an elementary school child that he or she doesn't deserve to one day to go to college. I don't believe any member of this chamber would deny a teenager fresh out of high school the chance to pursue further achievement in higher education. But it is equally unjust to withhold assistance to students who face financial barriers to pursuing their dreams of a college education as it is to actively deny them - especially when others already receive that assistance and it is well within the government's capacity to expand it to include everyone.

The Connecticut government is well within its means to make undocumented students eligible for financial aid at public colleges, as it has for every other college student. Indeed, undocumented students are just like every other college student: they've spent years in the classroom, plowing through textbooks and exams in pursuit of the promise made to them that success in school will return to them rewards in the form of better knowledge, more opportunities, and a brighter future. But only because of where they're from, these immigrants students find their futures cut short when they graduate high school and apply to college before they realize that higher education can't be an option because their families can't afford it.

For any other students, the government would recognize the importance of helping them access higher education when poverty is the only barrier. The government promulgates a mission to close the achievement gap and ensure equal opportunity for all, and that mission should not waver when it comes to immigrants who have committed themselves to becoming Americans and giving back to their communities as educated workers.

Making undocumented students eligible for financial assistance to attend college is the fair and economically sensible thing for this legislature to do. The livelihoods of thousands of people are at stake, and they cannot afford to wait another year for the chance to obtain higher education. Let's all come together and get S.B. 147 passed this legislative session.

Sincerely,

Alissa Wang