

Dear Members of the Higher Education Committee of the Connecticut General Assembly:

My name is Carlos Miranda, I am a graduate of Trinity College from Hartford. I am a member of the organization CT Students for a Dream

I stand in support of SB 147: AN ACT ASSISTING STUDENTS WITHOUT LEGAL IMMIGRATION STATUS WITH THE COST OF COLLEGE. This bill would equalize access to institutional financial aid at Connecticut public universities and colleges to all students regardless of immigration status.

My family came to US from Ecuador when I was 9. I went public school all throughout high school. Education has always been important to me so I devoted my self to get good grades. I was able to graduate in the top 10 of my graduating class in high school.

Someone with those grades should have no problem going to college but of course that is not the case when you are undocumented. My first encounter with the struggle was when it came time to apply to college. Most college applications have a question for you to fill out if you are the Citizen, resident, etc. I did not know what to put there and thought that this will stop me from making the application valid. A uninformed advisor at my school did not have a solution for me and actually made it worse in telling me that I would not be able to apply to college. Naturally as a living in the shadows person I took as the truth. As I knew of cases like this from other people experience them, I had seen undocumented kids reject a scholarship to a college that they earn because they were undocumented and at the time uninformed. But the idea of not being able to continue my education and follow my dreams was something I could not live with and so I took a big risk and started filling out college application with the box OTHER checked and I would write expired visa. Another advisor at my school that had seen me perform at the top of our class since freshman year was determine to help me as much as she can and together filled out the application checking OTHER and filled out some scholarship applications even without knowing if I would be eligible for them.

This of course was a risk that my family was not ok with me taking as they/we were all scared about letting my status be known. But I had convince myself that it was worth because what's is the worse thing they could say to me? "No, we cannot accept your application" okay fine I would have gotten the same response if I didn't try. But at least have the pice of mind that I did everything in my power to try to make it happen. For any interview I went to, of course, they would ask me about why I filled out that question with other and I would explain myself and share my story. Leaving all out in the table with the words "I just want to continue my education." As one can image, not all responses were positive and some just had to say "we cannot help you" but I continue to try and sent applications. Some response were good thanks to my grades and extra curricular activities, as being captain of the soccer team, caption of the swimming team and captain of the tennis team. But, sure college would sent me acceptance letters and again you would think that that's great but what the letters did not say is how I was gonna pay for tuition.

Because as an undocumented student, we do not qualify for financial aid or are able to get a loan. So, yes getting accepted felt good but knowing that there is no way I can come up with \$40,000 felt a lot worse then a "we cannot help you" to know that you are good enough but cannot do anything about it. Still I kept trying and was called for a Interview with a private Hartford scholarship, same thing I told my whole story and left it to them. This is when I began to fulfill my dreams. They accepted me for the scholarship and appointed me a trustee that was willing to help as much as possible. Sure the amount was not enough to cover a full tuition at a four year college but it was a start and it was a realization that it is possible! That there are ways to get help and at they are people who can see that all we want is a change to show you how much we want to continue our education. I began to receive more responses and more way to get help until the day that my whole life change with the help of all my support team I was accepted and given a huge help finally from Trinity College. That along with the other scholarship I

received was enough to for me to be able to attend college. Which is of course one of the happiest days of my life.

But please understand that this is an extremely lucky situation, as I saw many of my classmates (undocumented) who are just as smart as me struggle to get the right help and ended up not going to college because of it. Because they cannot afford it.

As I also saw kids who have all those privileges and not care to use them. While a know undocumented kid only wasn't a chance for education. That is why I believe that Connecticut must pass legislation that equalizes access to institutional financial aid for all students regardless of immigration status. All we want is to give the kids of this community a chance for higher education, a chance to make their own life and fulfill their goals.

It is not asking for a hand-out, but for a hand up. We are not asking for special treatment, but only the opportunity to access institutional aid on the same level as other students.

That is why I support SB 147 and hope the committee will vote favorably on SB 147.

Thank you for your time,

*Carlos Miranda*