

FWDYale

February 28, 2016

Testimony of Daniel Hamidi
President, FWDYale

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

To the Connecticut General Assembly Committee on Higher Education and Employment
Advancement:

I thank you for your support of S.B. 398 last year, and I respectfully urge you to pass the
current iteration of the institutional aid reform, S.B. 147.

Around their last year of high school, many undocumented youths in Connecticut must
come to terms with a heartbreaking truth. Unlike their peers, who, up until this point had
been their equals—their classmates, teammates, prom dates—undocumented students do
not qualify for institutional aid. As a result, many cannot afford to attend college, and, by
extension, cannot pursue their educational, occupational, and life aspirations. Like their
citizen peers, undocumented students—who crossed the border as children, through no
fault of their own—deserve the opportunity to achieve their dreams.

In addition to moral justifications, offering undocumented students access to institutional
aid is a strategic investment in the state economy. An educated workforce is a productive
one. Extending access to higher education would offer undocumented immigrants the
opportunity to innovate in the technological, scientific, business, and other sectors. In the
long-term, this would nurture the growth of Connecticut's up-and-coming industries,
bringing new jobs to the state for everyone. It would also boost the state's revenue; a
college degree increases one's lifetime tax contribution by a staggering \$55,000.

Furthermore, S.B. 147 would also correct an unfair situation. Unauthorized students who
are enrolled in state colleges help finance institutional aid programs through their tuition
payments. Enacting this bill would unequivocally offer all students who contribute to the
institutional aid fund access to aid.

Finally, S.B. 147 is an important step toward meeting the state's equity goals. As the state with the highest achievement gap in the nation, Connecticut should make education as accessible as possible to its vulnerable populations, including undocumented immigrants. I thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Daniel Hamidi