

Dear Members of the Higher Education and Employment Advancement Committee of the Connecticut General Assembly:

My name is David Vita. I live in Stamford and I'm the Director of Social Justice at The Unitarian Church in Westport, CT. I'm writing to you representing our Immigration & Refugees Committee. We are united in our support of SB 147: AN ACT ASSISTING STUDENTS WITHOUT LEGAL IMMIGRATION STATUS WITH THE COST OF COLLEGE.

There are many reasons to support this bill but I will focus on the one that is most important to us: it is simply a matter of fairness, a matter of justice.

Institutional financial aid is need-based aid that is funded by tuition dollars. The current CT Board of Regents of Higher Education regulations state that 15% of tuition revenue (tuition money that all students pay to the school) is to be used as need-based aid to students.

Institutional aid comes from the tuition money that ALL students pay, not tax or state money. Undocumented students pay into this pool of money, but CANNOT have access to it. Why? Because a Social Security number is needed to fill out the application form and they don't have one.

This is a simple matter to fix. Currently five states — California, Minnesota, New Mexico, Texas, and Washington — allow undocumented students to receive state financial aid by simply using a form that does not require a Social Security number. Connecticut should become number 6.

*SB 147: An Act Assisting Students Without Legal Immigration Status With the Cost of Higher Education* will do just that. It requires the Board of Regents for Higher Education and The University of Connecticut to:

*"... establish procedures and develop forms to enable persons who are eligible for institutional financial assistance under subsection (a) of this section to apply for and receive... such assistance."*

Every student who pays tuition, and therefore pays into the institutional aid fund, should be eligible to benefit from it. Undocumented students are currently excluded. That needs to change. It's a simple matter of justice.

Thank you,  
David Vita

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