

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

My name is Father Carlos de la Torre. I am a priest in the Episcopal Church in Connecticut, currently serving as a curate for the Episcopal Church in Stamford and Lower Fairfield County. 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.

As a first generation college graduate, my education was made possible by the generosity of others. As the son of a housekeeper and a cook, I did not have the same economic access as many of my classmates. As a resident, now a citizen, of the United States, I was able to benefit from the great financial aid resources made available by the state and federal government. I can confidently say that if it weren't for this aid, I would have not been able to attend college. I would have not been able to embark on the journey that led me to find my vocation and attend graduate school.

As a citizen of this country, I have seen our country and our state at its best when it embraces the sojourner and all those who are in need in our various communities. Whenever we embrace those who long for a better life and a better way forward for themselves, their families, and their communities, we reach our fullest potential as a country, as a state, and as a people. This legislation will allow us to continue in this great legacy of acceptance and empowerment. This legislation will allow hundreds, if not thousands, of Connecticut students to receive access to financial aid--opening new doors for many around our state.

This legislation will not only make a college education more affordable for undocumented students, but it will also have an impact on our state for decades to come. Making education affordable for undocumented students will make our communities and our state a much stronger place. This legislation is about offering an affordable education to our future community leader, local business owners, and entrepreneurs. Extending financial aid to undocumented students is an investment in the future of Connecticut.

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

Thank you for your time,  
Father Carlos de la Torre, Missional Curate, The Episcopal Church in Connecticut