



From: Fr. James Manship, pastor, St. Rose of Lima Catholic Church, New Haven, and
Rev. Anthony L. Bennett, pastor, Mount Aery Baptist Church, Bridgeport
Co-chairs, Congregations Organized for a New Connecticut (CONNECT)

To: Higher Education and Employment Advancement Committee
Connecticut General Assembly

Re: Senate Bill 147

Date: March 1, 2016

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

We serve as the co-chairs of CONNECT, Congregations Organized for A New Connecticut. CONNECT is a broad based citizens' organization made up of 25 member congregations – Christian, Muslim & Jewish; black, white, & Latino; urban and suburban – from both New Haven and Fairfield Counties that work together to take action on the social and economic issues affecting our communities and for the common good. We are non-profit, non-partisan, and collectively represent more than 15,000 Connecticut residents.

CONNECT strongly supports Senate Bill 147. This bill would equalize access to institutional financial aid at Connecticut public universities and colleges to all students regardless of immigration status.

CONNECT worked back in 2011 to encourage the General Assembly to adopt legislation to allow undocumented young people in Connecticut to access our state university and college system at in state tuition rates. We knew then that the difference between in state rates and out of state or international rates was the difference between hundreds of young people being able to afford college and being effectively barred from our state colleges and universities because of cost.

Senate Bill 147 takes a critical next step to further eliminate another unequal barrier of cost that falls only on undocumented young people – access to institutional financial aid, aid that undocumented, tuition-paying students themselves contribute to. Like all students at Connecticut's public universities and colleges, undocumented students pay into and contribute to the pool of funds that is used for institutional aid. But undocumented students are barred from receiving any of this aid under current law. Equalizing access to institutional aid is an investment in Connecticut's future.

CONNECT strongly supports S.B. 147, and we urge the committee to vote in favor of the bill.