

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

My name is Gabriela Valdiglesias, I am a student of Hall High School from West 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 the Connecticut public universities and colleges to all the students regardless of immigration status.

I am from Lima, Peru. I've been in the U.S for 16 years. I came here around the summer of 2000. I'm currently a junior at Hall High School. Being undocumented in a country that mainly helps those who has citizenship is one of the biggest struggles my family has to face. Higher education access is important to me because it would allow me to study in a field that I am interested in and have a successful future. Soon I will have to go through the college process and map out my future. It is difficult to do that because my family does not have enough money to send me off to college. I am not given opportunities that will help me achieve my goals because education cost so much. I have to postpone all the things I want to do in my future because I cannot afford a good education. All the money I receive from doing work has to be saved up for college but most of the time I have to spend that money on personal needs or for school. I will have to work twice as hard than all of my peers because my family is not financially stable and cannot support my siblings and I all the time. If SB 147 were to pass I would not have to carry so much weight on my shoulders. I can believe and trust that I will be able to have a successful future. Financial aid would help me receive the education I and others deserve.

Undocumented students pay into this pool of money but unfortunately cannot receive any amount of money from it. I believe that this is unfair and unjust because those who pay into this pool deserve to have access to this aid. Undocumented students are investing in Connecticut's economy. Giving access to undocumented students will result in a higher graduation rate and increased tax revenue. It will help the economy and the future of these students. Connecticut has the worst achievement gap in the nation. For a state who has a goal of educational equality this is outrageous. If undocumented students have access it'll increase diversity in Connecticut's colleges and universities. Education is a right and by not giving access to undocumented students to this aid is taking away our right to a higher education. Undocumented students should be eligible for institutional aid just as other students who pay tuition.

Thank you for taking time out of your day to read this. I hope you will come to realize that undocumented students have just as much of a right to gain access to this aid. Once again I support SB 147 and hope the committee will vote favorably on SB 147.

Thank you for your time,
Gabriela Valdiglesias