



Testimony of  
**Jan Hochadel, President**  
AFT Connecticut, AFL-CIO

Higher Education and Employment Advancement Committee Hearing  
February 29, 2016

***SB 147 An Act Assisting Students without Legal Immigration Status with the Cost of College***

Dear Senator Bartolomeo, Representative Willis and Members of the Higher Education and Employment Advancement Committee:

My name is Jan Hochadel. I am the President of AFT Connecticut, a diverse state federation of more than 90 local unions representing more than 30,000 public and private sector employees. Our members include not only PreK-12 teachers and school support personnel, but also the faculty at the Regional Technical Community Colleges. I am submitting this testimony in favor of SB 147 An Act Assisting Students without Legal Immigration Status with the Cost of College.

SB 147 would equalize access to institutional financial aid at Connecticut public universities and colleges to all students, regardless of immigration status. As a Physics teacher in the Connecticut Technical High School System, I had children who were immigrants sitting in my classroom. I never knew or cared about their immigration status, because it was irrelevant to our mission of educating the next generation of thinkers. It is sad to think that some of these children left my classroom and were denied access to higher education solely because of their immigration status. In 2011, as a state we removed a major barrier to higher education for immigrant children by allowing them to apply for in-state tuition. Now in 2016, it is time for us to remove another.

My testimony on this issue is not just personal; I speak on behalf of AFT Connecticut. As a union of educators and staff members at UConn, UConn Health Center and our states community and technical colleges, these students are *our* students. When they sit in our classrooms, we want them focusing on their assignments, not trying to figure out how they will afford their education.

As a representative of thousands of teachers and paraprofessionals in our state's pre-K-12 education system, we work hard to inspire and encourage undocumented immigrant students every day to expand their horizons and put in the effort to make their dreams a reality. If we don't work to create a system which rewards their hard work and determination and allows for those dreams to become a reality, how can we stand in front of a classroom with any credibility?

My testimony on this issue also represents AFT Connecticut's deep and firmly held commitment to social justice and equality. As a labor union, we stand with the members of our community who are working to make Connecticut a more just society. Equality of access to higher education ensures everyone who works hard has a fair shot of success regardless of socioeconomic or immigration status.

We must remember education isn't about where you came from or how you got here but where you are going. It is about where we are all going as a society, together. I support SB 147 and I hope the committee will also. Thank you.