

**Subject: SB 147- An Act Assisting Students Without Legal Immigration Status with the Cost of College**

Date: February 29, 2016

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

My name is Jocelyn Ault, a multi-generation US citizen and resident of Stratford, CT. In both my volunteer time as well as professional work in urban schools (fostering family and community engagement in education through CommPACT Community Schools Collaborative), I endeavor to help students, families and our communities to thrive. Therefore 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. *Equalizing access to aid for undocumented students will cost taxpayers \$0.*

As we struggle with both fiscal and policy issues, we cannot put our heads in the sand and think that denial of support will fix problems. The Pew Research Center has estimated that Connecticut has over 130,000 undocumented residents (as of 2012). The typical undocumented immigrant head of household has only a 10th-grade education. According to the Census Bureau, the average earnings of someone without a high school diploma are \$18,900, which means they are not able to buy goods, invest in our economy nor boost our tax base. But the average college-educated household generated a fiscal surplus of \$29,250, thus significantly boosting us all. Access to institutional financial aid will not cost taxpayer dollars but instead will support access to education for all.

I have met children who lack legal immigration status. It is striking to see a similar storyline despite their geographic and cultural differences. Their parents have sacrificed greatly and instill a high value for education. In our urban schools, these students regularly appear in our top 10% of high school graduates, and amazingly have often not spoken English until they entered our school system. Note that this benefit would apply to students who spend at least two years in our high school system, so we have already been investing in them- let's try to make sure we have a return on that investment.

The Connecticut that I want to live in will recognize that ignoring a problem is not a solution. Clearly the passing of legislation that equalizes access to institutional financial aid for all students regardless of immigration status is one pathway to making sure that the next generation is educated and can contribute in a positive financial way. Through this bill, they will contribute to the institutional aid pool of funds and ultimately contribute needed skills and pay into our tax base. It is important that Institutional Aid is funded by tuition revenue, not taxpayer money.

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

Thank you for your time and interest in understanding the complexities of the issues and I hope you will recognize the positive effects this can have on our state.

*Jocelyn Ault*