

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

My name is Jordy Padilla, I am from Branford. I am an engineer at the engineering firm WSP – Parsons Brinckerhoff working for the I-95 New Haven Harbor Crossing Corridor Improvement Program. 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.

The importance of this bill lies close to my heart. Five years ago the thought of college seemed out of reach due to my status in this country – an undocumented American. I didn't believe college was accessible not because of my grades, standardized scores, language barrier, etc.. but because I lacked legal status that would help me gain financial assistance. Fortunately, I received a scholarship to the University of New Haven to specialize in Civil Engineering. I graduated college and I am now working as a full time civil engineer in the heavy civil division. This was made possible by DACA, an executive order that allowed me to work in this country legally. Such legal action gave me the opportunity to help re-build the infrastructure of the state of Connecticut. SB147 does not apply to me, but my previous struggles as an undocumented student are more evident today than ever before. There are hundreds of undocumented students in the state of Connecticut that have the potential to become engineers, but are unable to do so because they lack financial assistance. SB 147 is a bill that can only benefit the state of Connecticut, rather than harm. Please note the following details of the bill that are justifiable to the children that are only seeking higher education to better themselves and the community:

- Institutional aid is funded by tuition revenue, not taxpayer dollars. Therefore, this pool of money should be used for undocumented students that are residents of Connecticut. Such an action should be considered an investment in Connecticut.
- Current and previous undocumented students, like myself, have contributed to this institutional aid fund throughout the years. Therefore, undocumented students should be eligible for this fund as well. The inflow of money should have the same regulations as the outflow.
- There is nothing in Connecticut statutes or regulations that prevents undocumented students from accessing this aid.

The benefits of SB 147 to the state of Connecticut are immeasurable. Please note some of the specific benefits that are closely tied to SB 147:

- A realistic path to college will result in the increase of high school graduation rates and college matriculation.
- Short term impact would result in an increase in state revenue through tuition from new students that would be eligible for SB 147. Long term impact would be correlated with the higher income of college graduates to increase taxes each year.
- Similar programs in other states have not displaced students or been a financial drain.
- Equalizing access to aid to undocumented students will cost taxpayers \$0.

Apart from the benefits and details of SB 147, this bill has the potential to shape the lives of students from the undocumented community for the better. Many of us still live in poverty due to the lack of opportunities. I was able to progress in my life due to the opportunities that were given to me by the university and fellow advisors. The chance of a higher education gave me the ability to change my life and the lives of my parents. As I sit in my office, it is hard for me to fathom that there are students in 2016 that were just like me, struggling to attend college and sometimes, striving to survive in this state. I support the passing of SB 147 because it is a comprehensive bill that will change the lives of many well deserving students in the state of Connecticut. I dream of one day working on bridge, building, or a

highway with a number of professionals that benefited from SB 147. Please bring this dream to fruition for my community, my colleagues, and most importantly, the state of Connecticut.

Thank you,

Jordy Padilla

Engineer I

WSP | Parsons Brinckerhoff

424 Chapel Street

New Haven, CT 06511

Mobile: 203-747-4104

Padillaj1@pbworld.com

wsp-pb.com/usa