

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

My name is Jorell A. Meléndez-Badillo. I live in Mansfield Center. I am a Ph.D. candidate at the University of Connecticut's History department and an Instructor of Record at *El Instituto: Institute of Latina/o, Caribbean, and Latin American Studies*.

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.

Coming from a working-class environment and being the first in my family to pursue higher education I faced many obstacles along the way. Nonetheless, being Puerto Rican and, thus, a citizen of the United States has greatly facilitated the process of applying, studying, and getting funding when pursuing a higher education degree. As an educator and as a person of color, I think that education should not be a privilege but that States should have the obligation of making sure it is accessible for all of those who want to pursue it.

I have had the opportunity of working hand-in-hand with students who would greatly benefit from such legislation. They have excelled in all of my classes notwithstanding the obstacles being an immigrant presents to them. Keeping in mind the diversity of experiences of each individual, most of them navigate multiple systems of oppression that make their college experience, if they have a chance of paying for it, very difficult. SB147 would give them the *same* opportunity to fund their college career as any other person in this country that wants to pursue college education.

I cannot comprehend how a community of students that pay tuition cannot have access to *Institutional Aid*, which is funded by their money. Barring them from receiving such funds is not only discriminatory but it is taking advantage of a historically marginalized, ill-treated population. SB 147 would not simply allow students a fairer treatment in relation to accessing education but would be a step towards mending institutionalized discrimination, xenophobia, and racism.

Providing the possibility of attending college would make a huge positive impact in immigrant communities and the state as a whole. It will also make college more diverse and would open the way to subverting the history of treating immigrants as less. To think, argued scholar Hannah Arendt, is the essence of our human condition. Let us employ our humanity and think about how this law would greatly benefit a sector of the population that has been historically marginalized and mistreated. After all, equalizing access will cost nothing to taxpayers, as the money these communities are already paying funds it.

As a historian, as a Latino, as an educator, and, most importantly, as a human, I support SB 147 and hope the committee votes favorably on SB 147.

Thank you for your time,
Jorell A. Meléndez-Badillo, B.a., M.a., Ph.D. Candidate