

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

My name is Joseline Tlacomulco from New Haven, and I am an undocumented student at the University of Connecticut in Storrs. I am a regional organizer for CT Students for a Dream in the Willimantic/Storrs Region and I am 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.

I came to the U.S. when I was 8 months old with my parents escaping the poverty, violence and corruption they were suffering from in Mexico. Both my parents did not pursue a college degree due to the financial circumstances they both were in. The life my mom and dad had, was not the life they pictured for me. After we arrived in the U.S. we came to CT where we've been living for 18 years. I have not gone back to see my family who in which are complete strangers. I have not gone back to hear the various amounts of dialects that are spoken by the people in my hometown. I have not seen the culture that takes place in every single corner filled with history that I am not familiarized of. I have not gone back ever since.

I've been attending New Haven Public schools since K-12 grade and graduated from high school in 2015. My late middle and high school years consisted of being a musician playing in concerts with bands and orchestras with other talented musicians. With this I was very fortunate to get the support to pursue the music field even after high school. I am currently a freshman at UCONN pursuing a degree in Music Education. I want to become an educator in the music field in which I would not only like to change the lives of students, but in which students would change my life as well. Also, I am pursuing this career as I want to help other students navigate through a system that may not allow one to afford an instrument, nor private lessons as they are very expensive. These expenses cannot be reached by many students especially coming from a low income family. Pursuing higher education is the reason why my parents came here- so that I can graduate college and receive a degree. Being the first person in my family to attend college is one of the toughest things as I have and am encountering as there are many barriers along with being a first generation student. And that is due to being undocumented.

I was not aware of the barriers I would have to face because of my status. I was not told earlier in the years that I am not eligible for any federal aid because I am not a citizen nor a resident even though I come from a low-income family. Whereas I have two younger siblings that are growing up not seeing their father in the house due to him working all the time to pay for bills and to have food on their plates. Whereas both of my parents are working twice as hard so that I can continue my educational studies at the University even if it means for them having to sacrifice everything for my education. The stress and anxiety is not only on the shoulders of my parents, but on mine as well. There is not one day that goes by without me asking myself "How am I going to pay off for next semester?" or "Will I even be able to continue college?"

The bill SB147 would allow me and my parents to continue our daily lives without having to worry so much of finances that are very hard to pay off. This aid would allow me to continue pursuing my Ed degree and increase my chances of graduating college. Then I would be the first person in my family to graduate college as that is what my parents wish for. I would want to further my education by hopefully getting a Master's degree along with a PHD.

Not only would this bill help me, but it would also help many other undocumented students across the State. The non-existent help of financial aid are one of many factors that contribute into why undocumented students don't continue college. I admit- I am very privileged to even being in school while there are others who are not. I am privileged by the fact that my voice is being heard compared to the other unheard voices that are not being heard. If having access to higher education is really the goal for the State of Connecticut, SB 147 should pass and change the lives of many.

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

Thank you for your time,

Joseline Tlacomulco, Storrs