

Make the Road CT

850 State St, Bridgeport CT
787-612-6422



March 1st, 2016

Re: Testimony in favor of SB 147: AN ACT ASSISTING STUDENTS WITHOUT LEGAL IMMIGRATION STATUS WITH THE COST OF HIGHER EDUCATION

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

My name is Julio López Varona and I am the Lead Organizer of Make the Road Connecticut. With more than 18,000 members, Make the Road has fought to ensure respect and dignity for immigrant, poor, and working class New Yorkers. Now in Connecticut, our goal is to build the power of Latino and working class communities to achieve dignity and justice through organizing, policy innovation, transformative education, and survival services.

Make the Road would like to support SB 147: AN ACT ASSISTING STUDENTS WITHOUT LEGAL IMMIGRATION STATUS WITH THE COST OF HIGHER EDUCATION

Make the Road CT support a proposal that would expand access to institutional financial aid to undocumented immigrant students in CT. Institutional Aid is funded by tuition revenue; it is not taxpayer money. State colleges and universities in CT are required by state statute to set aside at least 15% of tuition revenue for institutional aid to students. All students, including undocumented students contribute to this fund and should be permitted to access these funds to support themselves while they pursue higher education.

An education for all Connecticut students is an investment in the future of Connecticut. When students know they will have the opportunity to go to college, we find that high school graduation rates increase and college applications also see a rise. Moreover, a path to a higher education results in an increase in state revenue in the short term from new students enrolling in universities. In the long term, these students then have higher chances of becoming productive members of society that can contribute to our state economy.

If our legislature is serious about achieving the goal of closing the achievement gap and of fostering progress among low-income and limited English-proficient students, enabling access to higher education for undocumented students, who are often low-income and people of color, will help Connecticut meet its statutory mandate and increase racial and socioeconomic diversity in the state's colleges and universities.

Undocumented students should have the opportunity to have access to these funds. This is not only the right thing to do, but it is also an opportunity to grow our economy by investing in our youth. For this reason, we call on legislature to pass SB 147 and create a mechanism for all CT students to have the opportunity to have access to college.

Thank you for your attention, Julio López Varona

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Julio', is written over a light blue circular stamp.

Julio López Varona
Lead Organizer / [Make the Road CT](#)