

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

My name is Laura Veira. I am a student at Brien McMahon High School in Norwalk. I am a member of the organization CT Students for a Dream. I stand in support of SB 147. This bill would equalize access to institutional financial aid at Connecticut public universities and colleges to all students regardless of immigration status.

I myself am undocumented. I was born in Colombia and was brought to the United States when I was three years old. Next year I plan on concentrating in chemistry with a secondary in ethnicity, migration, and rights at Harvard College. My tuition will be paid in full. However, the majority of undocumented students looking to further their education cannot say the same. Many like to use me as an example for what can be accomplished if you just work hard. I definitely have worked hard to get to where I am today, but that does not mean that many other undocumented students have not worked just as hard. Getting accepted into a school that will offer to pay your whole tuition is rare for any group of people, not just undocumented students. We are met at a particular disadvantage because we don't qualify for state or federal aid and are offered less aid when forced to apply as international students to some schools. Higher education access is important to me because I value my own education so much. Growing up as the youngest child in my family, I saw my siblings go through the struggles of applying to college.

I saw the feelings of hope when my sister was accepted to most of the schools she applied to and the subsequent despair when she realized that she would not be able to go because the schools couldn't offer her any money as an "international student". She had been living in the United States for 12 years.

My brother is currently a sophomore at Norwalk Community College. He was accepted and hoped to attend Uconn Stamford, but the \$13,000 price tag was too much for my family to take on. He currently works Monday to Saturday and gets home after 7 each day because he has to help pay for his education while going to school full time because even the \$4,000 tuition is too much for my parents' income.

If this bill were to pass, my brother would finally have access to the institutional aid pool that he has been paying into for two years. As he finishes up his associate's degree, he'll have to apply to other schools that will probably be more expensive. This opportunity could be the deciding factor in whether or not he would be able to continue his education. I support SB 147 and hope the committee will vote favorably.

Thank you for your time,
Laura Veira