

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

My name is Lesly Lopez, I am a student of Southern Connecticut State University from New Haven. I am a member of the organization CT Students for a DREAM. I stand in support of SB 147: AN ACT ASSSISTING STUDENTS WITHOUT LEGAL IMMIGRATION STATUS WITH THE COST OF COLLEGE. The bill would equalize access to institutional financial aid at Connecticut public universities and colleges to all students regardless of immigration status. My face began to turn red like a tomato as the tears began to roll down my cheeks. I looked around to make sure nobody was home as I dropped to my knees and let the tears fall. The letter in my hands fell to the floor as I let out the loudest scream in my life. I wanted to run away to a place where I would never be found, to a place where citizenship didn't matter. A week ago, I was called to the guidance office at my Metropolitan Business Academy. As I walked into the room I saw my guidance counselor at her desk, perfect curly hair covering her pearl earrings and her gorgeous blue eyes. As I sat down she began taking out envelopes, they were acceptance letters from colleges I applied to. Since 7th grade I had always imagined this day when I would choose in what direction to take my life. As the oldest and the first daughter to have the opportunity to attend college. my parents always pushed me to be the best. Having a B+ as a grade or even an A- was unacceptable at home. As a senior at MBA I was in the honors society, I had a 4.25 GPA and over 100 hours of community service. I also had a full time job as a manager in McDonalds. Applying and getting accepted into universities was the easy part, I got accepted to nine different universities: Quinnipiac University, UCONN, Eastern, UNH, Bay Path, Sacred Heart, SCSU, Albertus and Fairfield University. However, regardless of my grades, my recommendation letters, and my perseverance none of those colleges offered me a full ride. As I stared at her blue eyes, I wondered if my life would be easier if I had blue eyes, curly blonde hair and if I didn't have an accent when I spoke English. My guidance counselor tried to motivate me not to give up, she always reminded me that state universities were cheaper than private ones. However, it was to late my heart had already chosen Fairfield University, I fell in love since the first day I went for my interview, it was perfect. Small classes, beautiful campus and my best friend went there, I wasn't giving up easily. But here I was a week later I had received a letter from Fairfield about my financial aid packet. Since I was born in Mexico I'm not able to receive financial aid and scholarships are limited, I applied to get financial help from Fairfield but they only offered to pay half of my tuition. I didn't have the strength to ask my parents for \$30,000 a year to attend the college of my dreams. Being a freshman in college and having to work more than 30 hours a week to pay for my tuition is affecting me a lot. I'm not doing my best at school and I believe it's really unfair. I've been in this country more than half of my life, and my plans are to graduate in Bilingual Elementary Education and get a job in the city of New Haven. In addition, many of U.S citizens take for granted what I have to work twice as hard to achieve. I support SB 147 and hope the committee will vote favorably on SB 147.

Thank you for our time,

Lesly Lopez