

302 York Street, Suite MC A41 New Haven, CT 06511 March 1, 2016

Testimony of Maria Sarahi Melchor Member, Movimiento Estudiantil Chicano de Aztlán (MEChA) de Yale

In favor: S.B. No. 147

An Act Assisting Students Without Legal Immigration Status With The Cost of College

My name is Maria Sarahi Melchor and I am a current student at Yale University testifying on behalf of the Latinx social justice group on campus, MEChA de Yale. Today, I urge you to support Senate Bill 147.

While I cannot claim to be an expert on Immigration or Constitutional Law, I can claim to be an expert on the experience of being an undocumented student wanting to pursue higher education in Connecticut but not having the means to do so without financial aid.

An East Haven resident, I attended Public Schools as an undocumented student for almost a decade. At East Haven High School, I maintained a 4.9 GPA all while being heavily involved in the EHHS and East Haven Town community and working two jobs. Still, coming from a socioeconomically disadvantaged family, I knew that all of this hard work may not culminate in anything if I did not receive financial assistance to pay for college.

In the fall of my senior year of high school, I was nominated for the University of Connecticut's Day of Pride scholarship. However, because my residence application was still pending at the time, I was unable to apply for it. My biggest fear was coming true. I had worked hard in high school, yet it would be almost impossible for me, a low-income student to attend a top university like UConn without public financial aid.

Though my residency application was approved in 2014 and I am now eligible for public financial aid, I missed an extraordinary opportunity not acting on a UConn scholarship nomination I had earned. Government action is needed so that promising, hard working students,

have access to the opportunities and resources that they earned, deserve and urgently need, regardless of their immigration status.

Again, I urge you to support this bill. Your leadership can help Connecticut bring greater justice to bright, hard working students who have identified as American and contributed to their American communities for a long time now.