



February 17, 2016

Dear Higher Education Committee,

I'm writing in support of SB 147: AN ACT ASSISTING STUDENTS WITHOUT LEGAL IMMIGRATION STATUS WITH THE COST OF COLLEGE. I write to ask for your support in extending access to institutional aid at Connecticut state universities and community colleges to undocumented immigrant students who are long-time residents of Connecticut. Many undocumented Connecticut high school students hope to pursue higher education.

Unfortunately, many are unable to achieve this dream because they are ineligible for all federal and state need-based financial aid. The 2011 CT state legislation that granted in-state tuition rates to undocumented students was an important first step toward increasing access to higher education, but many immigrant students and their families are still unable to afford the high cost of tuition. Unfortunately, many students continue to be ineligible for need-based state financial aid. As a result higher education remains effectively unavailable to them.

As Director of UCONN's El Instituto: Institute of Latina/o, Caribbean & Latin American Studies, I see firsthand the difference that an education can make in a student's life. Extending institutional aid to undocumented students is an investment in the future of Connecticut. A realistic path to college for these students will result in improved high school graduation rates and increased college matriculation. In the long term, the higher incomes of these students will lead to increased tax revenues and lower expenditures on state health and social service programs.

In the period from now until the date when Congress enacts comprehensive immigration reform with a path to citizenship, we cannot ignore the lack of access to higher education for some Connecticut students. Each year, hundreds of undocumented students graduate from Connecticut high schools with hopes of college attendance; we must do what we can to help them now.

Passing SB 147 will not only help ensure a more prosperous CT economy, but also make a meaningful difference in the lives of many current and future students at our institutions of higher learning. I encourage you to act swiftly to address this urgent problem for these residents of our state and vote in support of SB 147.

Sincerely,

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