

-YALE COLLEGE- DEMOCRATS

Testimony of Michelle Peng
Registrar of Voters, Yale College Democrats

February 24, 2016
380 College St., C41
New Haven, CT 06511

In favor: S.B. 147
An Act Assisting Students without Legal Immigration Status with the Cost of
College.

I am the child of immigrants. My parents were lucky enough to enter the country with documentation. They were also lucky to come to this country relatively privileged. Unlike so many other immigrants who come here, my parents were already educated, with four higher education degrees between them by the time they emigrated. Because of this, I have always been able to attend the best schools in our area and come to Yale without having to worry about the cost.

They were able to do this, and give me this opportunity because of education. My parents, who grew up in the Chinese countryside, were able to leave their country better off than when they were born because higher education was widely accessible to them. They did not have to fill out pages and pages of financial aid forms or worry about tuition. Their education was the reason they were able to come to the United States and establish themselves firmly in the middle class here, and it's the reason I've never had to worry about mine.

Hundreds (thousands? idk how many) of Connecticut students are not so lucky. Not only are undocumented immigrants' income and wealth levels among the lowest in the country--something the Connecticut General Assembly has committed to fixing--but their financial burden is augmented by blocking their access to institutional aid. Allowing them to access this critical tool for financing a college education would be following through on the CGA's promise to undocumented immigrants. More than that, it's a question of fairness. In the status quo, undocumented students are paying higher tuitions relative to their peers, a portion of which is going to finance institutional aid for others while they themselves are deprived of any funds.

If Connecticut wants to make a real commitment to providing equal opportunity to all, then we must allow undocumented students to access institutional aid. Every Connecticut student deserves to have the same access to education as I do, and every Connecticut student deserves to be able to provide for their children the way that my parents have for me.