

FWDYale

Testimony of Molly Montgomery
Communications Ambassador, FWDYale

February 28, 2016
1035 Chapel Street,
New Haven CT, 06511

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

I believe that all students – with or without legal immigration status – deserve equal access to education. To prevent hardworking students from learning and succeeding perpetuates social injustice. Students without legal immigration status help to pay for the financial aid that their classmates receive even while they are denied access to the aid –and thus higher education – themselves. Such injustice contradicts the Connecticut legislature’s goal of educational equality. In order to actualize Connecticut values of equality, the state must commit to closing its achievement gap in education, which is the largest in the nation. Allowing undocumented students equal access to education will also increase diversity in colleges, thus allowing for greater learning potential for all students. Furthermore, since financial aid allows students to attend college, passing the bill will motivate more undocumented students to graduate from high school: while 92% of US born students between the ages of 18 and 24 have high school diplomas, only 60% of undocumented students do.

Barring students without legal immigration status from receiving financial aid also weakens the Connecticut economy. Equalizing access will cost the state no money while increasing graduation rates and tax revenue. On average, a college degree raises lifetime tax by \$55,000. Furthermore, immigrant business owners are already an important part of Connecticut’s net business income – in 2010, these business owners were the source of 15% of the net business income. Sending students without legal immigration status will only increase this income. And declining Connecticut public college enrollment rates will increase if more students are able to enroll after receiving the financial aid that they have been denied.

Nelson Mandela said, “Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world.” Please help to end injustice in Connecticut by allowing all students, regardless of status or income, to learn.