

March 1, 2016

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

My name is Myles G. Simon from Bloomfield, Connecticut. I am currently a student at the University of Connecticut approaching my graduation this coming May of 2016. This journey through college has taught me many things in regard to the importance of the financial support of our government and how much a citizen like myself relies on it for college attendance. I stand in support of SB 147: an act assisting students without legal immigration status with the cost of college. This bill would equalize access to institutional financial aid at Connecticut public universities and colleges to all students regardless of immigration status.

Friends and family alike are victims to the financial injustice that is faced by undocumented students. As a student in the state of Connecticut, I am very much aware of the cost of attendance to universities around the state and I NEED financial aid to attend college. I could not imagine not only not receiving institutional aid, but also not receiving any type of financial support from our state. College as it currently is today is expensive to attend compared to other countries with high attendance and graduation rates. Without speaking too far in depth in global context, The State of Connecticut needs to strongly consider assisting its students documented or undocumented in their financial struggles of attending colleges to give education equality to all.

Through the five years I have experienced years going through college at the University of Connecticut where I thought I could no longer attend the university because my financial aid was delayed for approval postponing my entrance for the upcoming fall semester. There have been times where my financial aid could not cover the entire cost of my academic year leaving me in a mindset of not knowing if I could pull money together to cover the rest of my tuition fees. Let alone being a citizen of the United States and a Connecticut native, I myself have struggled to afford school and I could not imagine what it is like to not even have these options available to me. I am on my final stretch of the road expecting to graduate this May 2016 with my degree in landscape Architecture. Landscape Architecture is a field that cannot be practiced unless you have your degree. LA is my passion, LA is my vocation. Without a diploma saying that I have achieved a higher education in the practice, I would not be able to live my dream and work at high end firms of my choice. It is not just that undocumented students with this same dream are not assisted in any way financially like I am to attain their dreams.

Countless of my friends are students who would benefit from institutional aid. I have stood by many who have went through the transition of realizing that they could not go to college due to prices they could hardly afford. There are students that I know who can only afford to attend college part time. I have also seen many of them drop out for graduation seemed like a false reality only American citizens could obtain. There are countless of talented undocumented students that graduate from high school with hopes of attending higher education and the longer they wait, the sooner their vocation slips from under them. For those who I know who are sticking through the struggle of paying for schools that are not assisting them, it is not fair that they are paying for my aid where I cannot pay for theirs. From the tuition revenue that all students pay into, the institutional aid is currently only disbursed amongst citizens. The fifteen percent that Connecticut state colleges set aside for institutional aid, could still make it to assist the fee bills of undocumented students and help lower their tuition cost. Every bit of help and assistance will go a very long way. Needless to say, granting undocumented students more opportunities to attend state colleges is an investment for our state and will increase state revenue due to an increase of college attendance. Equalizing access to aid to undocumented students will take \$0 out of taxpayers and will give millions to the state and institutions.

I support SB 147 and hope the committee will vote favorably on SB 147.

Thank you for your time,  
Myles Gregory Simon