



Testimony of Nicholas Girard
Treasurer, College Democrats of Connecticut

February 24, 2015
Woodland Drive
Stafford Springs, CT 06076

In favor: Senate Bill 147
An Act Assisting Students Without Legal Immigration Status With The Cost Of College

There are thousands of undocumented students in Connecticut who, after coming to the United States as young children, have built their lives in this state. We've attended the same school, we've sat at the same lunch table, we've been in the same activities, and we've taken the same tests. On graduation day, though, the path ahead diverges. A college education is essential in providing economic opportunity for life and financial aid allows equal access to this opportunity regardless of financial standing. For undocumented students, no or limited access to financial aid makes college an opportunity out of reach. Future political leaders, entrepreneurs, engineers, scientists are left without the resources to develop their talents. The state is holding back some of its best and most dedicated students, limiting the achievements of hard work. The educational system promises that with diligence, determination, and a commitment to learning, any individual can achieve all that they aspire. By limiting access to financial aid, we are revoking that promise by telling thousands of Connecticut students that because of their status, their dreams are on hold.

Furthermore, equalizing access to financial aid is a sound investment in economic development and entrepreneurship in Connecticut. College and higher education increases the skilled labor force, promotes the development of well paying jobs, and sparks greater entrepreneurship. New immigrant business owners account for nearly 15% of Connecticut's net business income. Education provides better skills, better tools, and better opportunities to participate in today's economy. By investing in undocumented students today, we can build a strong and fair economic foundation for tomorrow.

Therefore, now is the time to expand financial aid access for undocumented students so that all students in Connecticut have access to higher education. The state has the ability to make a future we believe in and invest in all of our students, regardless of background. Access to financial aid puts undocumented students on equal ground as their peers, reaffirming the promise of hard work and academic perseverance in making a brighter future.

Respectfully,

Nicholas C. Girard
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Legislative Captain, Yale College Democrats Legislative Committee