



EASTERN CONNECTICUT STATE UNIVERSITY

A Liberal Education. Practically Applied.

February 29, 2016

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

My name is Ricardo Pérez; I am Associate Professor of Anthropology and Coordinator of Latin American and Caribbean Studies at Eastern Connecticut State University in Willimantic.

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.

In the time I have taught university-level courses, I have known many undocumented students. From personal experience, I know they are motivated to learn and earn a college degree with which to contribute to Connecticut's economy and their own communities. The State of Connecticut must approve legislation to help ease the economic burden that undocumented students and their families face to access quality higher education. Public education is a right for all students regardless of ethnicity, religion, gender, nationality or immigration status. It is in the best interest of our state to develop a trained and educated populace that will further the highest standards of civility. We cannot divide our student body into a privileged group with ready access to higher education and another with obstacles to reach their dreams of getting a college education.

Institutional aid is funded by tuition revenue, not taxpayer money. In Connecticut, state colleges and universities set aside at least 15% of tuition revenue for institutional aid to students. Undocumented students pay into and contribute to the institutional aid pool of funds but do not have access to this aid. They should be eligible for institutional aid as all other students who pay tuition. There is nothing in the Connecticut statutes and regulations that prevents undocumented students from accessing this aid. Ensuring equality of access to higher education is a matter of justice that ensures everyone who works hard has a fair shot at success.

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

I thank you for your time,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Ricardo Pérez'.

Ricardo Pérez, Ph.D.
Associate Professor, Anthropology
Coordinator, Latin American and Caribbean Studies