

February 29, 2016

Dear Members of the Higher Education and Employment Advancement Committee of the Connecticut General Assembly:

My name is Tashi Sanchez-Llaury and I am an undocumented American. I was born in 1988 in Peru and came to the United States four years later. I have been in this country for 23 years, I have grown into the person I am today in this country, and I call Stamford, Connecticut home. However when it came time for me to go to college, after putting in a lot of effort to do my very best in school and dream big for future college goals, I was faced with the realization that I was not encouraged to succeed in that manner as an undocumented person. I had dreamed of applying to so many colleges to pursue my dream of becoming a teacher but come time to apply for schools I was told I could only apply to Norwalk Community College (NCC) because no other university would take undocumented people. While this information was incorrect, it wasn't too far off; while I could have applied to other schools I would not have been able to afford the tuition. I graduated from Academy of Information Technology & Engineering in 2006, at the time undocumented students still paid out of state tuition. It was a struggle, but I was fortunate enough to have parents so determined to help me achieve my academic goals that even if it meant being in debt and working extra hours they would help me take classes at NCC. Eventually, after the in-state tuition bill passed and I was able to pay less for school, the notion of transferring to a four-year university seemed actually feasible.

I transferred into Southern CT State University in 2013 and will be graduating this May 2016. While this is a big feat for me, momentous really, as an undocumented person; it has not come without struggle. It has been a struggle, both monetary and system wise to succeed in this higher education structure that does not support those of us without status. While in-state tuition made a difference in the trajectory of my education, which as an undocumented student was already behind that of those with status, it has still been costly and difficult on my parents. I have put a lot of effort into finding private scholarships and grants that will lessen this burden however I am one of many undocumented students

advocating for themselves in this manner and so it has not been an easy search. I am close to the end of my academic journey, however I stand in support of SB 147: AN ACT ASSISTING STUDENTS WITHOUT LEGAL IMMIGRATION STATUS WITH THE COST OF COLLEGE because of the opportunities it will open up for other undocumented students starting or currently in college. When I started working with CT Students for a Dream I joined because I was determined to help undocumented youth going through the struggle I went through to achieve my higher education goals. I believe in this bill because it would equalize access to institutional financial aid at Connecticut public universities and colleges to all students regardless of immigration status. I ask that you take these very real struggles of young CT students trying to better themselves and achieve their goals to give back to the community into mind when you are considering the passing of this bill. Think of these youth beyond their status and simply for what they are trying to achieve in their lives and as students who hope for more.

Thank you for your time,

Tashi Sanchez-Llaury
C4D Online Coordinator