

# Center for Youth Leadership

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*Why wait for someone else to make a difference?*

**Connecticut Legislature**  
**Higher Education and Employment Advancement Committee**  
***Testimony in Support of SB 147 (An Act Assisting Students Without Legal  
Immigration Status with the Cost of College) and  
HB 5376 (An Act Concerning Affirmative Consent)***  
***March 1, 2016***

*Valeria Baltodano and Namrata Ramakrishna*

Hello Senator Bartolomeo, Representative Willis and members of the committee. I am Valeria Baltodano and this is Namrata Ramakrishna. On behalf of the more than two hundred members of the Center for Youth Leadership in Norwalk and the Mayor's Youth Leadership Council in Stamford we are here in support of SB 147 and HB 5376.

The future of any high school student in Connecticut is tied to several factors, not the least of which is a sense of hope. It is this very hope, though, that is challenged on a near daily basis. Some of the challenges are internal – my insecurities, how much I push myself academically – but a good number are external, especially where laws and policies are concerned. That's why our members are pleased to see SB 147 and HB 5376 before you this session.

**SB 147: *An Act Assisting Students Without Legal Immigration Status***

The passage of SB 147 will amount to “academic hope restored” for nearly 20 percent of the students at each of our schools. In stories that have been shared with us by guidance counselors, parents and students themselves, one question, often said with anguish and resignation, haunts us. “Yes, I may get into college, but paying for it is nearly impossible. It's hopeless. *Why should I care about my high school years?*” And we're talking about students – yes, undocumented – with GPAs that any parent would be proud of; that would suggest academic success at any college of the student's choice.

The immediate effect of a “yes” vote on SB 147 will be more students enrolling and staying in college. A more subtle outcome is the hope you will give to hundreds of high school students in the state.

### **HB 5376: An Act Concerning Affirmative Consent**

Believe it or not, but way too many people my age are way too familiar with the situations outlined in HB 5376, An Act Concerning Affirmative Consent. In fact, as we said the last time we testified in support of an affirmative consent bill, “high school is considered by many to be a training ground for a lot of behavior found on college campuses.”

My parents and I hope I’m going to be safe at college, but we realize that campus life is a microcosm of society, with all of its positive aspects and attendant ills. That’s why a bill like 5376 is needed. We believe it will help make our community colleges and four year colleges safer, and protect our rights in the awful event of a rape or assault. In particular, we support the education and public awareness elements of the bill; the fact that the person alleging an assault can have a “support person of their choice” at hearings; and that the policies and protocols outlined in the bill will be uniform at all two-year and four-year institutions in the state’s higher education system.

There are, however, four items we kindly ask you research before finalizing the bill: (1) the bill needs to clearly state that the victim is protected from retaliation by the on-campus friends of the accused; (2) we believe some thought should be given to the use of impartial hearing officers; (3) we may have missed this but does the alleged victim have to report an assault or rape within a specific time frame; if yes, we would request as liberal a reporting period as possible; and (4) if the accused is found guilty at a campus disciplinary hearing does his record follow him if he transfers schools within the Connecticut higher education system. We’re not talking about a self-reporting check off box on a transfer request. We’re talking about an official note on the accused’s transcript.

Thank you very much for your time.