

February 29, 2016

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

My name is Vivian Moreno-Zelinka, I am a third year law student at Vermont Law School and a CT resident. I am a member of the organization CT Students for a Dream. 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.

I am in support of SB 147: AN ACT ASSISTING STUDENTS WITHOUT LEGAL IMMIGRATION STATUS WITH THE COST OF COLLEGE. I was born in Barranquilla, Colombia and moved to the United States when I was 17 years old. As a former undocumented student myself, I can testify to my own struggles.

It took me nine years to get my B.A. degree from a CT public university. This happened because like many current students without a legal immigration status I was not able to qualify for financial aid and thus, what could have taken me four years, ended up taking me almost a decade. As an undergraduate student who lacked access to financial aid I was never able to take full time classes and let alone afford to part take in any other school activities that could enrich my education. I was able to stay in school because I was lucky, I had a supporting family that went out of their way to help me whichever way they could. But for students who are not as lucky as I was, I can see the temptation to give up and quit school because of the frustration and the stress of not being able to access financial aid and consequently an education.

It is my belief that SB147 will have a positive impact in the lives of students who cannot currently access financial aid, not only because it will give them the opportunity to finish their education in a shorter period of time, but because it will make it easier for undocumented students

to get an education without having the burden and the stress of having to struggle to afford an education. SB147 will provide undocumented students with equal access to financial aid and it will make it easier to pursue higher education.

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

Thank you for your time,



Vivian Moreno-Zelinka