EASTERN CONNECTICUT STATE UNIVERSITY
83 WINDHAM STREET • WILLIMANTIC, CONNECTICUT 06226 • 860-465-5000

RE: SB 398 AN ACT ASSISTING STUDENTS ACCEPTED INTO THE DEFERRED ACTION FOR CHILDHOOD ARRIVALS PROGRAM WITH THE COST OF COLLEGE

Dear Chairs, Ranking Members, and members of the Committee:

My name is Joan Meznar, I am a Professor of History at Eastern Connecticut State University. Over the years, as a tenured or tenure-track professor at several institutions of higher education (including Mount Holyoke College, the University of South Carolina, Columbia, and Eastern Connecticut State University), I have both taught undocumented immigrant students and pondered the place of such students in our classrooms and in our communities.

Research on immigration has long demonstrated that those who leave their homes in order to seek a better life abroad tend to be the most talented, hardworking and self-motivated individuals. Undocumented immigrants face enormous challenges in order to arrive in the United States and, once here, more often than not become model members of our communities as they strive to improve the lives of their immediate families as well as of those who stayed behind in their home countries. Their children witness and reflect their bedrock values.

Our undocumented students bring a world perspective to our classrooms. Their hard work and diligence are contagious, inspiring classmates. They are problem solvers determined to succeed. They frequently demonstrate unusual empathy, even in the face of hardship and discrimination. In my experience, they have enriched university life for all.

As my colleagues have already eloquently argued, providing access to these, some of our most committed, students not only is the right thing to do ethically, it is also the best choice economically. If our state hopes to retain college graduates and create a welcoming environment for new immigrants, we should support SB 398.

I add my voice to that of the many others who have encouraged you to support SB 398. We should support all of our Connecticut students equally; we should treasure student residents who add so much to our communities.

Yours truly,

Joan Meznar

Joan Meznar
Professor of History