

Higher Education and Employment Advancement Committee

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Testimony by

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Good morning. Distinguished Members of the Higher Education and Employment Advancement Committee, my name is Wayne Locust, and I am the Vice President for Enrollment Planning & Management at the University of Connecticut. On behalf of President Susan Herbst, thank you for the opportunity to express our support of *Proposed Bill 17, An Act Assisting Students Without Legal Immigration Status with the Cost of College* and *House Bill 7000, An Act Equalizing Access to Student-Generated Financial Aid*.

The University of Connecticut supports all of our students and seeks to ensure that a quality, affordable education remains accessible, regardless of a student's immigration or economic status. We are in full support of legislation that would expand eligibility and access to student financial aid in Connecticut to undocumented students. We recognize that current state statute restricts our ability to provide financial assistance to these students, which may limit their educational access. This also means that undocumented residents enrolled at public colleges and universities in Connecticut are treated differently than other students who are residents, because of their immigration status. The legislation before you would change that for the better.

We have not conducted a full financial analysis of the impact of expanding financial aid eligibility to a new population of students. However, the fact is that our financial aid budget is always under pressure because we seek to maximize the amount of aid we are able to offer to attract and retain talented students, regardless of their economic circumstances.

We do not believe that expanding financial aid eligibility to what we estimate to be a relatively limited number of students will have major implications on our financial aid budget.

It is important to note that the fact a student is undocumented does not make them any more or less likely to be admitted to UConn. All applicants are evaluated and admitted to UConn based on their academic strength. Likewise, if this legislation is approved, the fact a student is undocumented will not make them any more or less likely to receive financial aid. All financial aid decisions are based on need, merit, or a combination of the two for every individual student.

If approved, we recognize the need to develop appropriate assessment forms and establish procedures that would accurately capture Estimated Family Contribution and actual need. We would work closely with the Board of Regents on that issue. Again, thank you for allowing me to express our continued support of the proposals before you.