Dear Members of the Connecticut General Assembly,

We write to ask for your support in equalizing access to student-generated, institutional financial aid at Connecticut’s public universities and colleges [BILL HB7000: An act equalizing access to student-generated financial aid and SB17: An act assisting students without legal immigration status with the cost of college] all CT students regardless of immigration status. We urge Connecticut lawmakers to pass [BILL HB7000 and SB17] this legislative session. Now, more than ever, it is crucial for Connecticut to uphold the values of equality for all its residents.

[Students Without Borders] supports this bill because it is the right thing to do for our students and because it makes good economic sense. All students, including undocumented immigrant students, pay tuition at Connecticut's public colleges and universities. A portion of all tuition money that all students pay is set aside to help students with financial need. This pool of money is called “institutional aid.” Even though undocumented students pay into the institutional aid pool, they are unable to have access to it. As a result, many undocumented students cannot afford to go to college and pursue their dreams. We feel it is a matter of fairness that all students are able to access the funds to which they contribute.

Financial aid for undocumented students is an investment in the future of Connecticut. According to the non-partisan Institute on Taxation Policy, undocumented residents of Connecticut already contribute over $136 million in sales, income, and property taxes. A college degree, according to the Rand Corporation, will increase an individual’s lifetime tax contribution by an average of $54,000. In the long term, the higher incomes of these students will lead to increased tax revenues and lower expenditures on state health and welfare programs.

Equalizing access to student-generated, institutional aid to include undocumented students will cost taxpayers nothing. The Connecticut General Assembly’s Office of Fiscal Analysis reported in the 2016 legislative session that this legislation would have no fiscal impact. Rather, it is a common sense measure that has been adopted by states as diverse as Texas and California. In 2016, a bill that would have equalized access to student-generated, institutional aid to all students regardless of immigration status passed the Senate with bipartisan support. This year, the General Assembly has a chance to follow the bipartisan consensus both in Connecticut and in states across the nation in favor of this sort of legislation.

Students Without Borders, here at the University of Connecticut calls on the Connecticut General Assembly to equalize access to student-generated, institutional aid to all students regardless of immigration status today.

Sincerely,
Jennifer Sagastume
Students Without Borders, UCONN Member