



Testimony of
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Higher Education and Employment Advancement Committee Hearing
February 13, 2018

HB 5031 An Act Equalizing Access to Student-Generated Financial Aid

Good afternoon Senator Bye, Senator Linares, Representative Haddad, Representative Staneski and member of the Higher Education and Employment Advancement Committee.

My name is John Brady and I am the Executive Vice President of AFT Connecticut, a diverse state federation of more than 30,000 public and private sector employees; which includes state workers, healthcare workers, public school teachers, paraeducators, and higher education faculty and staff. I am also a Registered Nurse with 21 years of service in the Backus Hospital Emergency Room. Those years of service would have never been possible without the financial help I received as a student.

I am here in support of **HB 5031 An Act Equalizing Access to student-Generated Financial Aid.**

There are Dreamers out there, who have studied and worked hard to be accepted to Connecticut's colleges and universities, who dream of being nurses, and teachers, and public servants, who are denied that opportunity because they are denied access to institutional aid.

Institutional aid is not a hand-out from taxpayers. It is the money colleges set aside from tuition to support students who have financial need. All students who pay tuition contribute to these funds. However, not all students with financial need receive these funds. Undocumented Connecticut students are barred from receiving any of this aid because of current law. It is a law that must be changed.

The law harms Connecticut economically. Last year the Office of Fiscal Analysis stated there would be no fiscal impact if the current law was repealed. In fact, the true impact would be an increase in tax revenue. The RAND Corporation estimates a college degree raises a person's lifetime tax contribution by \$54,000. As our state continues to struggle with the budget, it is foolish to deny undocumented students access to the education that leads to these good-paying jobs.

The current law is not just economically unwise, it is also profoundly unfair. Not only have these students worked hard to be accepted into our colleges, not only do they contribute to the system through their tuition, not only do they dream of using their talents to help Connecticut residents, but one of the principles that this country was founded upon is the idea that if you work hard you could get a hand and get ahead.

This year, we hope to join states from Texas to Washington in passing this bill, usually called the Dreamers bill. We urge you to support HB 5031 expanding institutional aid to all students, regardless of immigration status. Every year that passes with the current law is another year in which an unnecessary obstacle is placed between a deserving student and a college education. This is the year their dream must become reality. Thank you.