



February 13, 2018

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

My name is Laura Burfoot and I serve as the Administrative Director for Hearing Youth Voices, based in New London, CT. Hearing Youth Voices stands in support of HB 5031. This bill will equalize access to student-generated, institutional aid in CT public colleges and Universities for all CT's students regardless of immigration status.

Hearing Youth Voices stands in support of HB5031 because we are committed to the pursuit of justice in our communities. This issue is one of fairness and equity. It is, quite simply, *wrong* for students who are paying into Institutional Aid to not then be able to benefit from that Aid. In my position at Hearing Youth Voices, I have worked with many young people who were brought here by their parents as young children, who have worked hard to do well in school, and want to pursue higher education in CT. The majority of these young people come from hard-working families who, despite their tireless work, do not have extra income to support their children attending college or university. In the majority of cases I have seen, the young person is entirely responsible for coming up with the resources to attend college. They receive much love and encouragement and support from their family, but very little tuition support. It is, quite frankly, unacceptable for the state of CT to continue with this policy of discrimination based on immigration status.

In closing, I strongly encourage the Committee members to vote in support of HB5031. To do otherwise would be to continue a form of unfairness and inequity that contributes to a group of students in our state not being able to access a college education. The Connecticut that I know and love does not allow for discrimination and injustice of this kind. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Thank you for your time,
Laura Burfoot, Administrative Director
Hearing Youth Voices

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