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Testimony on HB 5031,
An Act Equalizing Student-Generated Financial Aid
Public Testimony
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The Office for Catholic Social Justice Ministry of the Archdiocese of Hartford supports HB 5031, which would equalize access to student-generated institutional financial aid for all students regardless of immigration status.

In 2011 Connecticut passed HB6390, which allows undocumented students who meet certain requirements to receive in-state tuition. We were part of the effort of that bill's passage. Unfortunately, our experience in working with the immigrant community reveals that the roadblock to access financial aid is holding many students back from receiving a higher education, despite the "in-state tuition". Even though these young adults are working two or three jobs, many intelligent, hard-working prospective students find the cost of a higher education prohibitive.

We believe that education is a basic human right, and denying access to student-generated institutional aid is an unjust practice. Institutional aid comes from the tuition money that all students pay, not tax or state money. Undocumented students pay into this pool of money, but cannot access to it because a Social Security number is needed to fill out the application form. With the will, this should be a simple matter to fix with a form that does not require a Social Security number.

The Office urges you to look beyond the negative attitude toward undocumented immigrants and consider the facts when reviewing this legislation. Our state should support actions that assist all students in our state, despite their immigration status. Doing so provides these young adults a pathway to a more accessible education, and one step closer to being even more productive members of society.

Lynn Campbell

Executive Director