

Wallingford, CT
Feb. 12, 2018

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

My name is Dr. Jesse Gleason, I am a resident of Wallingford, Connecticut. I am an Assistant Professor of World Language Education at Southern Connecticut State University and I would like to express my full support of HB5031. 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.

The issue of equal access to student-generated institutional aid in CT public colleges and universities is of critical importance to me as a teacher educator. Some of Connecticut's best and brightest bilingual educators have DACA. What is more, bilingual certification and world language education (Spanish in particular) is a shortage area and we are in desperate need of qualified teachers in these areas. By not passing this bill, the hurdle for students without legal immigration status to enroll and succeed is even higher. It is unfair to ask undocumented students to pay into a pot that they can never even hope of benefitting from, especially given the fact that many of these students work extremely hard to make ends meet, often working two or more jobs while studying full time.

At least three of my students last semester had DACA and I saw the stress and struggle they went through. The hardship of balancing so many things during a climate of such vehement anti-immigration rhetoric was extremely taxing for them. Nonetheless, they stuck it out and made the best of the situation in spite of it all. In the very least, legislators should support this bill which would not level the playing field by any means, but at the very least would equalize access to student-generated, institutional financial aid regardless of immigration status.

Since institutional aid is student-generated money funded directly from student tuition, undocumented students pay into the pool but do not have access to the aid. This is not undocumented students asking for a handout, but rather equal treatment in the face of the law. *It is a matter of fairness that all students are able to access the funds to which they contribute.*

I fully support HB5031 and hope the committee will vote favorably.

Thank you in advance for your time,



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