

February 13, 2018

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

My name is Dr. Lorraine Moya Salas and I am an Assistant Professor in the Social Work Department at Western Connecticut State University. I am also a resident of Norwalk, Connecticut. I wholeheartedly support HB5031-Equal Access to Financial Aid for Immigrant Students. This bill will make student generated, institutional aid in Connecticut public colleges and universities available to all Connecticut students regardless of immigration status. As an educator, I support legislation that promotes access to educational opportunities for all people.

I grew up in a Mexican family that was poor. No one in my family had ever been to college. I remember my mother telling me stories about how as a child she dreamt of becoming a fancy business woman. That did not happen for her but at an early age she instilled in me the importance of education. She taught me English, saw to it that I did my homework, bought me books from scholastic, walked 2 miles with me to the closest library, and volunteered in my school. My mother prepared me well to pursue higher education.

As I began to chase my educational dream, despite my parents' best efforts, we did not have the resources to pay for the high-cost of college. I was fortunate, however, and received scholarships and financial assistance. I know very well I would not have made it through the educational system without the opportunities I received. I am now a very educated woman. I have choices in my life, all my needs are met, and I do not have to worry about doing without.

Throughout my career as a social worker, I have worked with diverse families some of whom were immigrants. I met women like my mother who want what all mothers want. They want their children to receive a good education, to have a bright healthy future where they can contribute to the world by working with their minds and not just their hands. I believe that these children, like all children, deserve the opportunity to be educated.

My lived experience demonstrates that education is a pathway to a positive future. I believe that when we have the power we should seize the opportunity to create educational opportunities for youth. Utilizing the talents of all our youth, irrespective of the circumstances of their birth, to create thriving communities is ultimately in the best interest of us all.

Thank you for your consideration of HB5031. I strongly urge the committee to vote favorably and support equal access to education.

Sincerely,

Lorraine Moya Salas, PhD
Assistant Professor
Western Connecticut State University