

Make the Road CT

850 State St, Bridgeport CT
787-612-6422



February 13th, 2018

Re: Testimony in favor of HB5031: A bill equalizing access to student generated, institutional financial aid in CT public colleges and universities for all of CT's students regardless of immigration status

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

My name is Julio López Varona and I am the State Director of Make the Road Connecticut. At Make the Road Connecticut, our goal is to build the power of Latino and working class communities to achieve dignity and justice through organizing, policy innovation, transformative education, and survival services.

Make the Road would like to support HB5031: A bill equalizing access to student generated institutional financial aid in CT public colleges and universities for all of CT's students regardless of immigration status.

Make the Road CT supports a proposal that would expand access to institutional financial aid to undocumented immigrant students in CT. Institutional Aid is funded by tuition revenue; it is not taxpayer money. State colleges and universities in CT are required by state statute to set aside a portion of tuition revenue for institutional aid to students. All students, including undocumented students contribute to this fund and should be permitted to access these funds to support themselves while they pursue higher education.

An education for all Connecticut students is an investment in the future of Connecticut. When students know they will have the opportunity to go to college, we find that high school graduation rates increase, and college applications also see a rise. Moreover, a path to a higher education results in an increase in state revenue in the short term from new students enrolling in universities. In the long term, these students then have better chances of becoming productive members of society that can contribute to growth in our state economy.

If our legislature is serious about achieving the goal of closing the achievement gap and of fostering progress among low-income and limited English-proficient students, enabling access to higher education for undocumented students, who are often low-income and people of color, will help Connecticut meet its statutory mandate and increase racial and socioeconomic diversity in the state's colleges and universities.

Undocumented students should have the opportunity to have access to these funds. This is not only the right thing to do, but it is also an opportunity to grow our economy by investing in our youth. For this reason, we call on legislature to pass HB5031 and create a mechanism for all CT students to have the opportunity to have access to college.

Thank you for your attention, Julio López Varona

Sincerely,

Julio López Varona
Sate Director / **Make the Road CT**