

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

My name is Katherine Cecilia Villeda. I am the president of Students Without Borders at the University of Connecticut-Storrs. We are a student run organization that aims to educate, advocate and create allies for immigrant communities at the University of Connecticut. Students Without Borders stands in full support of HB5031. This bill would equalize access to student-generated, institutional aid in Connecticut public colleges and Universities for all of Connecticut's students regardless of immigration status.

At Students Without Borders, we have had the pleasure to work alongside several immigrant students at UConn, where we have had the opportunity to learn about the obstacles immigrant students face in affording their higher education. Many work several jobs while being full-time students just to get through every single semester in hopes of getting their college degree and go on to pursue their dream career. With that, we have also come to learn that many immigrant students will also prioritize paying for their tuition over other needs, such as health insurance. Students and their families should not have to make the type of decisions where they need to decide between affording a college education or health coverage, as both are important needs.

Immigrant students contribute into institutional aid pools by having no other choice but to pay college tuition in full most of the time if they wish to pursue a college education. It is unfair and cruel to have immigrant students pay into this pool of money and not receive any benefits out of it.

HB5031 would also allow Connecticut to proactively address its education equity gap issue in ensuring higher education is more accessible to all Connecticut students, regardless of immigrant status.

With the current political climate, in which the TPS program has been ended for several countries and roughly 122 undocumented young adults lose protective status everyday since the rescinding of DACA, Connecticut can take the step in easing one burden by passing HB5031. Students Without Borders fully supports HB5031 and hopes the committee will vote in favor of it.

Thank you for your time,
Katherine Cecilia Villeda, President, Students Without Borders, UConn