

Higher Education and Employment Advancement Committee

JOINT FAVORABLE REPORT

Bill No.: HB-5031

Title: AN ACT EQUALIZING ACCESS TO STUDENT-GENERATED FINANCIAL AID.

Vote Date: 3/15/2018

Vote Action: Joint Favorable Substitute

PH Date: 2/13/2018

File No.: 165

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SPONSORS OF BILL:

Higher Education and Employment Advancement Committee

REASONS FOR BILL:

To allow students who can be classified as in-state students, regardless of immigration status, to access institutional financial aid that is funded by tuition collected from all students.

Substitute language:

- Lines 5-10: adds student eligibility language inspired by DACA eligibility language

Lines 21-29: adds affidavit language as an eligibility condition

RESPONSE FROM ADMINISTRATION/AGENCY:

[Governor Dannel P. Malloy and Lieutenant Governor Nancy Wyman](#): Governor Malloy and Lieutenant Governor Wyman expressed the importance of access to financial aid being a way to make higher education affordable, as it is a large predictor of financial stability. They mentioned their previous support for legislation that granted in-state tuition to undocumented students. They emphasized the importance of immigrants to the United States and Connecticut's future. They also cited recent political debate regarding young, undocumented immigrants as a reason to support these undocumented students.

[Mark Ojakian, President, Connecticut State Colleges and Universities](#): President Ojakian discussed the pool of aid that institutional aid uses and how it is funded by tuition dollars, including those paid for by undocumented students. He also discussed federal legislation that gives states the authority to provide benefits like institutional aid to undocumented

immigrants. He cited the expiration date for DACA and the federal fight for legal protections for undocumented immigrants.

[Mona Lucas, Assistant Vice President for Enrollment Policies & Strategic Initiatives, University of Connecticut](#):

Ms. Lucas expressed UConn's support for HB5031. She mentioned that UConn has not conducted a full financial analysis of the impact of this legislation, but also that the financial aid budget is always under pressure as they are always trying to maximize the amount of aid they are able to offer. She stated that a student's immigration status does not play a role in their admittance. She said that if this legislation is passed that UConn would work with the Board of Regents to establish a system of assessment for the Estimated Family Contribution and actual financial need.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF SUPPORT:

[State Senator Martin Looney, Senate President Pro Tempore](#):

Senator Looney illustrated the pathway of previous legislation that he sees as equalizing access to educational opportunity: [PA 11-43](#), which granted in-state tuition to undocumented students who met specific criteria and [PA 15-82](#) which reduced the length of high school education that students must complete to receive in-state tuition. Senator Looney mentioned that many of these students have lived in Connecticut for virtually their entire lives and that they are a large part of Connecticut's future as the state grapples with out-migration of young people. He emphasized the need to have more college educated young people to create a workforce that is attractive to businesses, to offer higher paying jobs to these college educated students, to lessen the likelihood of crime and need for government assistance, and increase the number of future taxpayers.

[State Representative Matthew Ritter, House Majority Leader](#):

Representative Ritter described the pathway of previous legislation: [PA 11-43](#), which granted in state tuition to students who fell under the federal government's Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals Program (DACA) and certain residency requirements, and [PA 15-82](#), which lowered the in-state residency requirement from four to two years. He cited the Trump administration's recent repeal of DACA as a large motivator to help create opportunities for this vulnerable population in Connecticut by granting institutional financial aid to undocumented students. Representative Ritter went on to explain that the reallocation of this aid does not place an additional burden on the Connecticut tax payer and opens access to an aid pool that undocumented students have been contributing to and will continue to contribute to through tuition. He emphasized that the passage of this bill is in compliance with federal law, which allows a person without legal immigration status to obtain postsecondary education benefits through the enactment of a state law which provides for such eligibility.

[Geno Ayala, School Counselor, New Britain High School](#):

Mr. Ayala discussed his work with various high school students and the injustice he feels is being done by continuing to place such a heavy financial burden on undocumented students without equal access to aid. He said "As an educator there is nothing more precious than opportunity and access."

[Sister Mary Loreto Beckstein, Congregation of the Sisters of Charity of Our Lady, Mother of the Church](#):

Sister Beckstein expressed her embarrassment that Connecticut has "an 'All pay and NO aid' financial aid system." She explained she had difficulty understanding how those

who contribute to the pool of aid are unable to benefit from it and that she believes education is vital for society.

[Ciaran Berry, Associate Professor of English, Trinity College](#): Professor Berry described his own immigration story and discussed how he could not have received his Masters degree here in the United States without receiving the support he did. He has seen the stress the current immigration policy debates are putting on students. He mentions the significant benefits to Connecticut by enacting this legislation, outside of the ethical question, like increase to state revenue by bringing more students into the state education system and improving graduation rates, without placing any cost on the taxpayer.

[Joe Bertolino, President, Southern Connecticut State University](#): President Bertolino described how SCSU sets aside 18% of its tuition income to provide institutional aid to students, which is more than mandated by the Board of Regents. He mentioned that all students pay into this fund but undocumented students are unable to benefit from it, which SCSU believes to be unfair. He emphasized the potential to boost students' chances of degree completion without the burden of financial hardship. He also emphasized that 85 percent of SCSU's 1200 annual graduates remain in Connecticut.

[Alok Bhatt, Community Defense Coordinator, Connecticut Immigrant Rights Alliance](#): Mr. Bhatt discussed CIRA's support for this bill. He described the systemic prejudice he believes undocumented students suffer from, due to the lack of assistance they receive despite their contribution to that assistance.

[Bryan Bonina, President, Congress of Connecticut Community Colleges](#): Mr. Bonina described the Congress of Connecticut Community Colleges' commitment over the past six years to this issue. He believes it is unfair that these students pay into a fund they do not benefit from. He also discussed how many of these students are fully integrated into American society and have no memory of their native countries. He asked that the General Assembly renew its investment into higher education.

[Camila Bortolletto, Founder, CT Students for a Dream](#): Ms. Bortolletto described her own immigration story as an undocumented person who was formerly a student. She came to this country at the age of 9 from Brazil, went to all of her schooling from that age onward in Danbury, graduated from Danbury schools and went to Western Connecticut State University, graduating in 2010 with a degree in biology and a minor in international studies. She struggled to pay out-of-state tuition, as this was before the in-state tuition law passed in 2011. She illustrated the real impact that this could have for many undocumented students and addressed the claim that this is a hand out, as it's not special benefits but rather about equal access.

[Carolina Bortolletto, Founder, CT Students for a Dream](#): Ms. Bortolletto, a graduate of Western Connecticut State University with a bachelors degree in biology and minors in international studies and anthropology, discussed the need to eliminate luck from being the only way for undocumented students to complete degrees. She illustrated the difficult process to get her Masters, having to apply to many scholarships, hold multiple jobs, and still take time off due to lack of funds. Ms. Bortolletto outlined the years of support and effort that CT Students for a Dream has given to supporting this bill for years. She pleaded with the committee to ensure that this bill gets to the floor.

[John Brady, Executive Vice President, AFT Connecticut AFL CIO](#): Mr. Brady discussed the economic impacts of providing undocumented students with institutional aid. He argued that institutional aid is not a hand out, but instead equal access to a fund undocumented students pay into with tuition dollars. He cited the Office of Fiscal Analysis' statement that there would be no fiscal impact if the current law was repealed. The impact he foresees is an increase in tax revenue, as college educated people pay more in tax revenue.

[Laura Burfoot, Administrative Director, Hearing Youth Voices](#): Ms. Burfoot declared Hearing Youth Voices' support comes from their commitment "to the pursuit of justice in our communities." She described this issue as one about fairness and that students should not have to pay into a fund that they do not benefit from.

[Lynn Campbell, Executive Director-Archdiocese of Hartford](#): Ms. Campbell stated that the Office for Catholic Social Justice Ministry of the Archdiocese of Hartford believes education to be a human right and denying access to student generated institutional aid is an unjust practice. She urged the committee to look past the attitude toward undocumented immigrants and try to help young adults on their pathway to education.

[John Castelluzzo, Counselor, Brien McMahon High School](#): Mr. Castelluzzo told the committee about a student he advised who revealed that he was undocumented. That student had gotten discouraged in school because he felt as though he did not have any postsecondary educational options due to his immigration status, despite possessing immense academic and athletic talent. Mr. Castelluzzo believes that in passing HB 5031, this situation might be alleviated for students like the one he discussed. He feels that undocumented students who contribute to the pool of institutional aid should be able to access that institutional aid.

[Dr. John B. Clark, President, Western Connecticut State University](#): Dr. Clark wrote testimony to support WCSU's DACA students and the committee's efforts to support these students. He expressed pride that President Mark Ojakian and two WCSU alumni are at the forefront of fighting for DACA students. He cited some events held on WCSU's campus that are in support of undocumented students. He asks that these students be treated as "part of our future generation."

[Lucas Condognolla, Executive Director, CT Students for a Dream](#): Mr. Condognolla testified on behalf of Connecticut Students for a Dream (C4D). He stated that their organization is a statewide, youth-led network fighting for the rights of undocumented youth and their families, achieving this mission through community organizing, leadership development, and advocacy. He listed several key beliefs of C4D: that institutional aid is student funded and undocumented students should have access to that fund, that this legislation would equalize access to all students who have established Connecticut residency, that this legislation is not to create special benefits for a small group of people, that accessing institutional aid would have small impact on the overall system, and that the effort to equalize aid to students is different than the fight to create permanent status for undocumented youth.

[Dr. Daisy Cocco De Filippis, Naugatuck Valley Community College](#): Dr. De Filippis described an event at Capital Community College when the Dreamers came to speak to the Board of Regents about their stories and their desire for access to institutional aid. She went on to

discuss an event with US Representative Elizabeth Esty celebrating Hispanic Heritage Month. She asked the committee, “Why should these students, some of our more vulnerable young people, have to incur the expense of paying tuition whose benefit they are only permitted to receive at 85% percent?” and went on to discuss the moral and economic implications of the legislation.

[Antonio Farias, Vice President for Equity & Inclusion/Title IX and Section 504 Officer, Wesleyan University](#): Vice President Farias said he fails to see how student-generated financial aid is considered a drain on the state tax base. He asked that undocumented students be given a fair opportunity for an education as they could be the next generation of Connecticut, which he said is experiencing a brain drain.

[Jose Feliciano, Connecticut State Program Coordinator, Hispanic Federation](#): Mr. Feliciano spoke on behalf of the Hispanic Federation’s 12 Latino Nonprofit member agencies across Connecticut in full support of Proposed HB 5031. He cited the fact that undocumented immigrant students pay into the institutional aid pool through tuition but do not have access to this aid. He also cited that college graduates statistically stand to make significantly more and contribute more as taxpayers.

[Dr. Erica Fernandez, Assistant Professor, University of Connecticut](#): Dr. Fernandez shared that as an educator, she has seen many of her undocumented students constantly struggle with various financial aspects of tuition and asks the committee to vote for this bill as it would increase access to educational opportunities for the students she works with.

[James Foran, School Counselor, Connecticut River Academy at Goodwin College](#): Mr. Foran told the story of an undocumented student he worked with who cannot go to college as she is not going to receive any aid because of her immigration status. He said that there are many students like her and that they deserve to have equal access to institutional aid.

[Esteban Garcia, Associate Bursar, Southern Connecticut State University](#): Mr. Garcia told his own story of his struggles to get a postsecondary education, which he was only able to do by working a full time job while attending college full time. He graduated with honors from Three Rivers Community College and later from UConn. As an associate bursar, he discussed how hard it is for families to afford college as it is, and harder still for families who cannot receive institutional aid. He said that this legislative initiative will likely benefit the state as more students will enroll at Connecticut’s public colleges and universities.

[Dr. Jesse Gleason, Assistant Professor, Southern Connecticut State University](#): Dr. Gleason is a professor of World Language Education and believes that some of the best bilingual educators are DACA recipients. Dr. Gleason spoke about the negative direct effects on her students from trying to balance school and paying for their education, while the DACA debate was really heightened. She encouraged the committee to support this bill in order to treat these students fairly.

[Dr. Gena Glickman, President, Manchester Community College](#): Dr. Glickman discussed the issue of access to educational opportunities and financing those opportunities. She emphasized that students without access to Federal financial aid struggle the most, which includes DACA students.

[Cheryl Greenberg, Professor, Trinity College](#): Professor Greenberg sought to advocate for the difference she has seen financial aid make for students with need, as she is a professor at a private institution. She discussed her family's immigration story. She added that she taught at foreign universities, including the University of Helsinki, where higher education is free, which is a model she hopes the United States can work toward.

[Reverend Abraham Hernandez, Executive Director, National Hispanic Christian Leadership Conference for the State of Connecticut](#): Reverend Hernandez explained that two of the directives of the National Hispanic Christian Leadership Conference are youth and education. He sees these directives as cause to speak in support of HB 5031, as he sees how it could help many young people in the immigrant community.

[Juan Hernandez, Vice President, SEIU 32BJ](#): Mr. Hernandez lauded Connecticut for taking steps to give undocumented youth greater access to higher education. However, he cited that many students are still unable to access higher education because it is so cost prohibitive. He also discussed the status of undocumented students being in limbo with the federal government and the many states that have passed tuition equity laws or policies.

[Dr. Rayda Krell, Professor, Western Connecticut State University](#): Dr. Krell strongly urged the committee to support HB5031 as she believes Connecticut students who are paying into this fund deserve a chance to apply for those funds. She stated the mission of the Connecticut State Colleges and Universities, emphasizing the commitment to help individuals achieve their personal and career goals. She said that Connecticut was not fulfilling its commitment to the CSCU mission statement if they do not provide more students with the opportunity for an affordable education.

[Kaley Lentini, Legislative Counsel, American Civil Liberties Union of Connecticut \(ACLU-CT\)](#): Ms. Lentini discussed that Connecticut has a significant undocumented immigrant population and that the children of that population find themselves unable to access the same resources as their peers. She stated ACLU-CT's commitment to rights of immigrants and that in their view, the bill is critical for young adults to achieve their full potential.

[Dr. David Levinson, President, Norwalk Community College](#): Dr. Levinson expressed that he believed it only fair that any person who can be classified as an in-state student should have equal access to receive financial aid from the State of Connecticut and funds that are appropriated from tuition dollars that undocumented students pay. He cited his work as Board Vice Chair of Connecticut Students for a Dream (C4D) as a way he regularly meets many "Dreamers" who seek to have a fair opportunity to pursue their education.

[Joanne Lewis, Managing Attorney, Connecticut Legal Services, Inc.](#): Attorney Lewis discussed her work with undocumented youth, saying that the students she works with are bright and talented. She urged the committee to support this bill as it does not cost taxpayers more to provide this institutional aid to undocumented students.

[Eric Cruz Lopez, Program Coordinator, CT Students for a Dream \(C4D\)](#): Mr. Lopez discussed his own immigration story, coming to this country fifteen years ago and encountering many other undocumented immigrants or those with their documentation constantly in flux. He described the Connecticut education system as lacking in equity and resources for undocumented students. He asked the committee to vote favorably.

[Dr. William Lugo, Professor, Eastern Connecticut State University](#): Dr. Lugo said that our education system is at a crossroads brought on by “brain drain” and declining enrollments and the continued loss of Connecticut’s best and brightest to other parts of the country. He sees these undocumented students as those who are seeking to put forth the effort to contribute to the future of the state and that they are simply lacking in the opportunity as they don’t have access to institutional aid.

[Dr. Anna Malavasi, Assistant Professor, Western Connecticut State University](#): Dr. Malavasi stated that she treats her students equally regardless of immigration status, but is also aware that many of her students do not disclose their immigration status for fear of consequences. She urged the legislature to pass this legislation so that students like hers can have institutional aid.

[Carlos Moreno, State Director, Connecticut Working Families Organization](#): Mr. Moreno cited several sources that undocumented individuals pay a large amount in taxes, that a college degree raises lifetime tax contribution, and that this bill would be of no cost to Connecticut taxpayers. He also discussed New York’s free public college program and how this could negatively affect Connecticut public college enrollment.

[Michele Mudrick, Legislative Advocate, Connecticut Conference, United Church of Christ](#): Ms. Mudrick wrote on behalf of the 237 congregations and 67,500 people in Connecticut’s churches. She stated that as a people of faith, they felt that all Connecticut students deserve access to institutional aid because these students pay into the institutional aid pool.

[Werner Oyanadel, Senior Commission Analyst, Commission on Equity & Opportunity](#): Mr. Oyanadel stated the mission of the CEO is “to inform and engage all policy makers about constituent needs for the African American, Asian American, Pacific Islanders, and Latino and Puerto Rican populations in Connecticut.” He then went on to describe that many students without immigration status are recipients of DACA. Mr. Oyanadel also cited that institutional aid is from tuition dollars.

[Lori J. Pelletier, President, Connecticut AFL-CIO](#): Ms. Pelletier urged the committee to vote favorably on the bill on the basis of fully welcoming immigrants, that undocumented students pay into the fund for institutional aid through tuition dollars, the Office of Fiscal Analysis determined there would be no fiscal impact to passing this legislation, and that this measure would increase enrollment in public universities, expand the state’s tax base and generate economic growth.

[Dr. Ricardo Perez, Professor, Eastern Connecticut State University](#): Dr. Perez testified about his experience working with undocumented students at Eastern Connecticut State University, saying that they are motivated to contribute to Connecticut and their communities. He also discussed the fact that undocumented students pay into the pool of aid with their tuition dollars.

[Dr. Rachel Prunier, Associate Professor, Western Connecticut State University](#): Dr. Prunier emphasized her feeling that by asking undocumented students to pay into a system they do not benefit from, they are subsidizing other students’ education. She also argued that by lifting the financial burden through institutional aid, undocumented students would have an

easier time focusing on classwork, participation in extracurricular activities, and prompt course registration.

[Dr. Sarah Raskin, Professor, Trinity College](#): Dr. Raskin cited a 1982 US Supreme Court case, Plyler v. Doe, which ruled that undocumented children have a constitutional right to receive free K-12 public education in order to promote participation in society and discussed that this barrier is still present with higher education. She also mentioned students pay into the pool of aid through tuition dollars without receiving a benefit. She told a story about a student she had who was undocumented.

[Orlando Rodriguez, Research and Policy Development Specialist, Connecticut Education Association](#): Mr. Rodriguez discussed the precarious status of undocumented students as a result of Congress' uncertainty regarding DREAMers legal status. He said that in denying DREAMers institutional aid, the state singles out these DREAMers. In representing public school teachers, Mr. Rodriguez says they see a large benefit to providing DREAMers with great access to higher education.

[Dr. Howard Russock, Emeritus Professor, Western Connecticut State University](#): Dr. Russock stated that his students who were immigrant students, regardless of documentation, have been exceptionally hardworking and separated only by chance. He discussed how many students struggle to stay in school due to financial need. He also discussed how institutional aid is funded through tuition dollars, which is paid in part by undocumented students.

[Dr. Lorraine Moya Salas, Assistant Professor, Western Connecticut State University](#): Dr. Salas discussed her own journey to higher education, stating that it would not have been possible without institutional aid, as she grew up in a poor Mexican family. She also talked about her experience working as a social worker with families who could stand to benefit from institutional aid.

[Siavash Samei, Executive Board – Guide, UConn Graduate Employee Union](#): Mr. Samei discussed his own family's immigration story, saying his opportunity to attend an institution of higher education would not have been possible without financial aid, which would not have been accessible if it weren't for his family's fortunate immigration status. He also discussed his experience as a member of UConn's Graduate Employee Union, saying that many of the members of the union often have the most facetime with university students, some of whom struggle due to lack of financial aid as a result of their immigration status. He stated that the "All Pay and No Aid" financial aid system is unfair and a poor investment in the future of Connecticut.

[Dr. Meredith Sinclair, Assistant Professor, Southern Connecticut State University](#): Dr. Sinclair stated that she sees many of her students struggle to pay for their tuition. She sees it as unfair that these students pay into a pool of aid that they cannot benefit from, that would cost the taxpayers nothing. She also discussed the need for qualified teachers.

[Tracy Tyree, Vice President for Student Affairs, Southern Connecticut State University](#): Ms. Tyree stated that many students at Southern would stand to benefit from access to institutional aid. She also stated that these students contribute to institutional financial aid through tuition payments but are unable to benefit from that aid pool.

[Julio Lopez Varona, State Director, Make the Road CT](#): Mr. Varona described how institutional aid is funded through tuition dollars, which is funded from undocumented students' tuition payments as well as their documented peers' tuition payments. However, undocumented students cannot access this aid pool. He discussed the benefits to pursuing a higher education, including high school graduation rates increasing, college applications increasing, the better chances of these students becoming productive members of society.

[Katherine Cecilia Villeda, President, UConn Students Without Borders](#): Ms. Villeda stated that she has worked alongside many undocumented students, learning about the sacrifices these students have had to make including working full time jobs and sacrificing their health or insurance to pay for tuition. She also stated that these students pay into the institutional financial aid pool without receiving any institutional aid and that these students are in a precarious position due to the federal government's lack of action on the status of these students.

[202 additional people submitted testimony in regard to this bill](#)

NATURE AND SOURCES OF OPPOSITION:

None

Reported by: Steph Goebel

Date: April 5, 2018