



April 19, 2018

Dear Sen Michael McLachlan

As a group of Western Connecticut State University faculty and staff we are writing to express our support for **SB4 / HB5031: (AN ACT EQUALIZING ACCESS TO STUDENT-GENERATED FINANCIAL AID)**. This bill will provide for equal access to student-generated institutional aid in public colleges and universities for all students, regardless of immigration status. All tuition-paying students, including undocumented ones, contribute to the institutional financial aid that benefits many students. It is assumed that all students can access this aid; however, undocumented students cannot.

A number of the undersigned and others at WCSU who work to support our students with undocumented or Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) status live in your district and support this bill. Many of the undocumented students we have had the privilege of meeting and working with also live in your district. These students and their families are our neighbors, co-workers, and friends. They are an integral part of our community. These young Connecticut residents have the burden of paying for their education, but have no access to financial aid. Most, if not all, of these students have been raised in the U.S. and are the product of Connecticut's public education system.

It is of some concern that these students do not even have the opportunity to apply for this support, despite the fact that their tuition is included in the funding pool to provide this financial aid. SB 4 / HB 5031 will correct this injustice, without putting any additional burden on taxpayers or students. To be clear, no additional funding is required. This bill simply **will** allow undocumented students to access and apply for the financial aid generated in part by tuition dollars they already pay. The undocumented and DACA students at WCSU are among the brightest and most dedicated students on campus. Their struggles—from obtaining a driver's license to concerns about sudden deportation for family members due solely to political shifts—have been invisible to many people. They want what we citizens take for granted: a chance to thrive in a society with opportunities for all.

As you may be aware, according to the State of Connecticut Board of Education and pursuant to Section 10-8b of the Connecticut General Statutes (C.G.S), there are [10 endorsement areas designated as certification shortage areas for the 2017-2018 school year](#).¹ The Connecticut Mirror has reported that in [2014 more than 250 teaching positions went unfilled statewide](#).² Many undocumented students are also bilingual, so, potentially could contribute to reducing shortage areas. However, the lack of equal access to institutional aid creates a burden on these students, and ultimately affects the well-being of the State by making it more difficult to produce graduates in these critical shortage areas.

Our students also aspire to careers in nursing, another essential field with critical shortages. According to a study by the Connecticut League for Nursing, [in 2008 Connecticut ranked 49th out of 50 states in producing registered nurses](#).³ It is expected that by 2020 the state will have a shortage of nearly 23,000 nurses. Moreover, there is a [lack of racial and ethnic diversity](#)⁴ in RN faculty and students compared to the state population. With [51% of nurses in Connecticut age 55+](#),⁵ these young people are willing though regrettably unable to help fill the growing nursing shortage because of the uncertainty about their future and lack of equal access to institutional aid.

Connecticut must pass legislation equalizing access to student-generated, institutional financial aid for all students regardless of immigration status. As university allies of students who will one day contribute to our state and our country, we are committed to equal access to educational opportunities for all, including underrepresented students on our campus. The education of our undocumented and DACA youth is important for the future of our state, and those in power now must act to help them.

We urge everyone in a position to do so to vote favorably for this bill.

Thank you for your attention,

WCSU Undocu-Ally Task Force
Western Connecticut State University

¹ <http://www.ct.gov/trb/cwp/view.asp?Q=276124&A=1598>

² <https://ctmirror.org/2017/08/08/facing-teacher-shortages-state-to-propose-certification-overhaul/>

³ <https://www.ctleaguefornursing.org/upload/files/2008ctnursingstudy.pdf>

⁴ <https://www.ctleaguefornursing.org/upload/files/CT-Data-RN-Prelicensure-Education-2015-CLN-Faculty-Student-Infographic.pdf>

⁵ <https://www.ctleaguefornursing.org/upload/files/CT2013-RN-UCONNISON.pdf>

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