

MASSACHUSETTS CATHOLIC CONFERENCE  
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August 19, 2011

The Honorable Michael O. Moore  
Senate Chair, Joint Committee on Higher Education  
State House Room 215  
Boston, MA 02133

The Honorable Tom Sannicandro  
House Chair, Joint Committee on Higher Education  
State House Room 472  
Boston, MA 02133

**Re: House 2109 and Senate 566, "An Act Regarding Higher Education Opportunities for High School Graduates in the Commonwealth"**

Dear Chairman Moore and Chairman Sannicandro,

Each year as summer draws to a close, many recent high school graduates throughout the Commonwealth prepare to begin a new academic year filled with hopes and dreams for a bright future along with the boundless excitement of entering into the next phase of the educational ladder to success. House 2109 and Senate 566 would make the college experience possible for more Massachusetts high school graduates by providing the same hopes and dreams to those young adults currently excluded from certain benefits due to their immigration status.

Children, even if they lack certain documents, should be offered "in-state tuition" alongside their peers if they earn acceptance into a state college after studying for three or more years at a Massachusetts high school. This policy would encourage all youth to do well in school, model culturally-competent leadership and benefit the entire Commonwealth in many ways.

For example:

- Empty seats on college campuses could be filled, resulting in new revenues and increased talent;
- Youth would be encouraged to make choices that enhance their dignity and the common good;
- Every child has a unique purpose, making higher education possible supports the development of those irreplaceable skills and qualities;
- "In-state tuition" has reduced high school dropout rates in other states and could do the same here;
- Greater diversity on college campuses would benefit all students in Massachusetts; and
- The current structural rules that prohibit "in-state tuition" appear to target and isolate a marginalized community (undocumented youth). This legislation seeks to end that unjust discrimination.

Across the Commonwealth, many educators and religious leaders build bridges between diverse communities, nurture the hopes and dreams of students and work hard to create a just society. House 2109 and Senate 566 provide the legislature an opportunity to do the same. This legislation embraces and models justice for all.

The Massachusetts Catholic Conference (“Conference”) is the public policy office of the Roman Catholic Bishops in the Commonwealth, representing the Archdiocese of Boston and the Dioceses of Fall River, Springfield, and Worcester. On behalf of the “Conference”, I urge you to report favorably on these two bills and hope to work with you to assure their passage before the full legislature.

Please contact me or Kathy Davis at 617-367-6060 if we can be of any further assistance to you.

Sincerely,

James F. Driscoll, Esq.  
Executive Director  
Massachusetts Catholic Conference

cc: The Honorable Deval Patrick, Governor  
The Honorable Tim Murray, Lieutenant Governor  
The Honorable Therese Murray, President of the Senate  
The Honorable Robert A. DeLeo, Speaker of the House  
The Honorable Stephen M. Brewer, Chair, Senate Committee on Ways & Means  
The Honorable Brian S. Dempsey, Chair, House Committee on Ways & Means  
The Honorable Sonia Chang-Diaz, Chair, Joint Committee on Education  
The Honorable Alice K. Wolf, Chair, Joint Committee on Elder Affairs  
Members of the Joint Committee on Higher Education