



Massachusetts Catholic Conference
66 Brooks Drive
Braintree, MA 02184
617-748-5630
www.mscatholic.org

LEGISLATIVE TESTIMONY

To: Joint Committee on Higher Education

From: James F. Driscoll, Esq., Executive Director

Re: Senate Bill 669 and House Bill 3003, “An Act providing access to higher education for high school graduates in the Commonwealth.”

Date: June 15, 2017

The Massachusetts Catholic Conference respectfully submits this testimony in favor of Senate Bill 669 and House Bill 3033, “*An Act providing access to higher education opportunities for high school graduates in the Commonwealth.*” These companion bills would make the college experience possible for more Massachusetts high school graduates by providing the same opportunities to those young adults currently excluded from certain benefits due to their immigration status. These bills would allow high school students, regardless of immigration status, who have attended high school for three or more years in the Commonwealth, graduated from a high school or attained the equivalent in the Commonwealth, to be eligible for in-state tuition rates and fees at the University of Massachusetts or any other state university or state college or community college in the Commonwealth.

The reasoning behind this policy change is clear. In many instances, the children of undocumented immigrants arrived in the United States as infants and children. By studying at a public high school and attaining admittance to a public institution of higher learning, they have demonstrated a desire to become productive members of our society.

The Catholic Church teaches the importance of human dignity and the unity of families. This simple policy change would honor both of those important missions. Regardless of immigration status, these young students deserve the opportunity to further their educational careers with the same advantages afforded to their peers. Additionally, a college classroom would provide a safe and stable place for undocumented students, especially in this uncertain time for those individuals.

Catholic scripture tells us to welcome the stranger. Every day the Church serves the Commonwealth’s immigrant populations in our parishes, schools, charities, and other institutions. These bills would allow certain undocumented immigrants to qualify for in-state tuition only if they meet strict criteria. For many of these students, this is the only home that they have known. It would simply be wrong to deny higher educational opportunities to students

based largely on the immigration status of their parents. In this spirit, we urge the committee to report Senate Bill 669 and House Bill 3003 favorably.

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