



Legislative Testimony
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**Written Testimony Supporting
House Bill 5185, An Act Concerning Special Immigrant Juvenile Status**

Senator Moore, Senator Suzio, Representative Urban, and distinguished members of the Committee on Children:

My name is David McGuire, and I am the executive director of the American Civil Liberties Union of Connecticut (ACLU-CT). I am submitting this testimony in support of House Bill 5185, An Act Concerning Special Immigrant Juvenile Status (SIJ status). As an organization committed to justice and equality, the ACLU of Connecticut strongly supports this bill, and we urge you to do the same.

The ACLU-CT believes in equality for all people, no matter where they are from or what they have been subjected to in their past. Young immigrants are contributing to our state in a multitude of ways and deserve to be respected and offered help when they need it. Young immigrants who have been abused, neglected, or abandoned deserve the opportunity to apply for SIJ status. Late last year, the Connecticut Supreme Court in *In re Henry P. B-P* identified a troubling gap between the Connecticut and federal age limit for applying for SIJ status.

This bill would answer the call of the Connecticut Supreme Court by allowing immigrant youth up to age 21 who have been abused, neglected, or abandoned to apply for protection under for federal SIJ status relief. This would allow these young immigrants, many of whom are dependent upon a caregiver for their needs, to address their immigration status. This will give them the time they need to finish their education, become employed, and meet their basic needs, so that they can continue to contribute to our society.

Passing this bill into law would put Connecticut in step with other states in the Northeast that have already addressed this issue by providing young immigrants with these protections. New York, New Jersey, and Massachusetts allow youth to apply for protection with the federal government.

We urge you to support House Bill 5185 and begin to pave the way to a bright future for these young immigrants.