



# Tuition Equity

# 2017 Advocate Toolkit

**Pennsylvania Immigration and Citizenship Coalition**

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# 2017 Tuition Equity Campaign Toolkit



This toolkit includes 3 easy ways for advocates and allies to support the campaign for tuition equity. If you have any questions, or want to get more involved, please contact PICC's youth organizer, Maria Sotomayor at: 215-832-3482 or [mariasotomayor@paimmigrant.org](mailto:mariasotomayor@paimmigrant.org).

## 1. Legislative Visits

In-person visits are essential in gaining the support of legislators. These visits are an opportunity for legislators to hear directly from constituents about key issues affecting the communities they represent. See the attached how-to on legislative visits for tips and suggestions.

Ask your Senator to co-sponsor "**Tuition Fairness**" **House Bill 1042**, and ask your Representative to introduce a version in the Senate! After you visit your legislator, please let us know how it went! This is particularly important if your legislator committed to co-sponsoring or voting for the Tuition Equity Legislative visit report-back form: <http://bit.ly/1cai702>.

## 2. Social Media

Social media is an important tool for raising awareness of issues. We encourage you to regularly post and share information about Tuition Equity on your personal and organizational accounts. Included in this toolkit are some sample Facebook posts, tweets, and shareable images to get you started.

To help maximize impact, PICC will organize a back to school week of action. During this week we encourage you to:

- Change your profile picture to show your support
- Post about Tuition Equity on your social media accounts.
- Share posts from PICC and PICC members. We will be posting and sharing on both our Facebook and Twitter accounts:
  - Facebook: <http://www.facebook.com/PAImmigrant>
  - Twitter: @PAImmigrant

## 3. Write Letters to the Editor and Op-Eds

Op-Eds and Letters to the Editor are great ways for community members to express their opinions and help guide the public conversation about important topics. This toolkit includes tips on writing op-eds and LTEs, and some samples from other states.



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## VISITING LEGISLATORS

In-person visits are essential in gaining the support of legislators. These visits are an opportunity for legislators to hear directly from constituents about key issues affecting the communities they represent. Below are some tips and hints for preparing to meet with a legislator and what to do in the meeting.

### Before Your Visit:

- **Make an appointment!** All legislators have local district offices as well as offices in Harrisburg. You can look up the names of your representatives and find their contact information online at: <http://www.legis.state.pa.us/>
- **Don't go alone!** Bring someone else from your community who cares about the Tuition Equity. This could be an undocumented student, a teacher who has undocumented students in their class, or a faith leader with undocumented members of their congregation.
- **Prepare!** A typical visit will last approximately 15-30 minutes. Because time may be short, it is critical to plan your message in advance in order to have an effective visit. Read the materials you will be bringing with you so you understand them and practice your talking points.

### At Your Visit:

- **Introductions and Who You Are:** Make sure every participant is able to introduce themselves, where they live, and any organizational affiliations they have. Thank the legislator or staff member for their time and for any work they have done in the past in support of Tuition Equity or other pro-immigrant policies (if you have this information).
- **Why You Are There:** Briefly outline what Tuition Equity is and why it is important for Pennsylvania. This is a good time to give the legislator and/or staff a copy of the fact sheet or one-page handout on Tuition Equity.
- **Personalize It:** Sharing personal stories is the most important part of any legislative visit. This is where you and other community members can show how passing Tuition Equity will affect real people who live in the legislator's district. If you don't have a story to share, bring written testimonials, pictures, or drawings that illustrate how important Tuition Equity is to young people who live the district.
- **What You Want:** Remember to directly ask the legislator if they will co-sponsor Tuition Equity and vote for it. For members of the House Education Committee: Ask if they will vote HB1042 out of committee this year.
- **Thank You:** Thank the legislator and any staff you met with for their time. If the legislator or staff had questions you were unable to answer, make sure to get their contact information so you can follow-up.

### After the Visit:

- Follow-up with any information requested by the legislator or their staff. If you need help tracking down an answer, please contact PICC!
- Report your visit to PICC, especially if the legislator committed to co-sponsoring or voting for Tuition Equity. Report-back form: <http://bit.ly/1cai702>.



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## SOCIAL MEDIA EXAMPLES

### Facebook/Website – choose a graphic!

- I support Tuition Equity because the hard working youth of Pennsylvania deserve the respect and dignity of being permitted to receive an education at a fair and equitable price.
- Tuition Equity would allow undocumented youth in PA to pay in-state tuition rates at public institutions of higher education. No one is asking for a free ride. This is about fairness and equity.
- “I cannot wait for the day where I can tell that next 16 year old girl or boy desperate for guidance that Pennsylvania as a state finally values their determination, skills, and smarts. We are not only yearning for Tuition Equity. We need it. It’s time.” –Audrey, Lancaster
- “I had to fight for access to education since I came to this country, being denied the right to attend public education as a child because of my status then finding barriers to access higher education was discouraging and often frustrating for me. I was lucky to be accepted to a private institution that cared about my education rather than my status. Paying for private school and not being able to access financial aid was hard on my parents, we often feared not being able to afford tuition. Tuition Equity will help students like myself attend college without having to face the same hardships I had to face. I want future high school graduates to have choices and the opportunities I never had.” – Maria, Broomall
- As an undocumented youth of Pennsylvania, Tuition Equity would allow me to pay in-state tuition rates at public institutions of higher education. I am not asking for a free ride. I am not asking for a pathway to citizenship. I am merely asking for an equitable tuition rate.
- I support Tuition Equity because my (son/daughter) worked just as hard as (his/her) classmates in high school, and (he/she) deserves the respect and dignity of being permitted to receive an education at a fair and equitable price.

### Twitter

- Denying undocumented Pennsylvanians in-state tuition costs PA tax revenue. It’s time to pass #PATuitionEquity
- No free tuition, no automatic path to citizenship. Simply a fair price. Pass #PATuitionEquity
- College should not be a dream. It should be a reality. #PATuitionEquity
- We need to pass #PATuitionEquity to advance our country together through education.
- It’s time to pass #PATuitionEquity so every hard-working child can see the word “accepted” in their future!
- College should not be my dream. It should be my reality. Pass #PATuitionEquity
- We need to pass #PATuitionEquity to advance our country together through education.
- Pass #PATuitionEquity so I can tell my little (brother/sister) (he/she) can strive for and achieve a college education!



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## TIPS FOR WRITING AN “OP-ED” OR LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Most newspapers publish opinion essays submitted by community leaders, experts, elected officials, and just plain citizens. These are known generically as op-eds because they often appear opposite the editorial page. A Letter to the Editor (LTE) is a chance for readers to respond to articles in a newspaper or express their opinion on an issue they feel passionate about. Op-Eds and LTEs are great ways for community members to express their opinions and help guide the public conversation about important topics. Before your submit, read the paper’s guidelines for submission and read some of the op-eds and LTEs it has published to observe what issues are covered, who gets published, and how other people present their arguments.

### Planning Your Letter:

**Length:** Op-eds are short, 700-800 words maximum, and LTEs are even shorter, often 200 words maximum. Each paper determines its own guidelines for length, submission, topics, etc. Be prepared for the paper to suggest edits for clarity or space.

**Messengers:** Papers are often more likely to publish an op-ed from a recognized expert or prominent local leader. If you do not have any particular expertise or knowledge of the issue, consider enlisting someone prominent or influential in the community to submit it under their name. Ghost writing op-eds for others is very common.

**Where to Submit:** Start out by submitting to your local paper.

### Writing Your Letter:

**Grab attention:** An opening paragraph should get the reader’s attention and invite them to read on. Use strong, colorful language, humor, unusual examples, and establish what or who is at stake. A personal story or sympathetic anecdotes about the people that would be affected if action is taken, or not taken, are a good way to draw readers in.

**State your case:** After grabbing the reader’s attention, you need to move quickly to the position you are advocating. Be concise and clear (e.g., “Pennsylvania should pass Tuition Equity”).

**Your evidence:** After stating your position, provide supporting evidence and examples that develop your argument. Remember to be succinct and give priority to the most important or compelling evidence.

**Provide a summation:** This part needs to draw the connection between the reader and the position you are taking. Why is it in the best self-interest of the reader to agree with your position? What’s in it for them? You want to structure your argument so that readers walk away agreeing with your position.

**The closer:** Again, the closing can be an opportunity to engage the reader, put a human face on the problem, state the consequences of not taking your position, or to end with a clever and memorable “zinger.”

**About the author:** For an op-ed, include a one line description of who you are, and why you are qualified to advise others on what position to take.



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## SAMPLES

### **OP-ED: WHY TUITION EQUITY IS GOOD FOR THE STATE AND GOOD FOR ALL OF US**

*May 16, 2011*

Imagine you are the child of hard-working parents. You participate in school activities, achieve academic distinction and contribute to your local community. Your dream is to continue your education by going to college. But through a simple twist of fate, you are undocumented. Under current Oregon law, you must pay out-of-state tuition regardless of how long you have attended school in Oregon. With out-of-state fees as much as three times the cost of in-state tuition, college is out of the question.

On March 29, 2011, the Oregon State Senate voted to pass Senate Bill 742 (Tuition Equity), bipartisan legislation that will grant in-state tuition to students regardless of their immigration status. Under the bill, students must attend school in the U.S. for at least five years, attend school in Oregon for at least three concurrent years and graduate from an Oregon high school. The bill now moves on to the State House for debate and final vote.

Rick (not his real name), a student at Mt. Hood Community College (MHCC), offers insight into why this measure is so important. Rick and his mother immigrated to Oregon when he was 12. He dreams of attending a four-year school once he has completed his two years at MHCC. He is uncertain how he will manage with costs so high. For now, Rick intends to take one class at a time. For many of Rick's friends, however, this is not the case. As Rick said, "A lot of friends in high school just give up. They know they won't be able to afford an education. If there was some kind of hope, they would be more encouraged to complete high school."

A key argument against Tuition Equity is that granting in-state tuition to undocumented students equates to a subsidy that would cost the state unjustified expense. The Tuition Equity bill would not provide funding. Instead, it would ensure that if students meet the requirements for acceptance, they would pay tuition comparable to other residents. The bill would merely provide equal access. Many experts have indicated that the Tuition Equity bill would, in fact, increase the revenue for state universities, since it would open enrollment to a larger group of students.

There is also concern that granting tuition equity would cause our public universities to be inundated with undocumented students and make admission for legal residents more restrictive. According to the National Immigration Law Center, the experience of states that have already passed similar measures indicates this is not the case. What does happen, however, is that the percentage of local students pursuing college degrees increases. This is good for the state.

We long ago recognized the right to equal access to K-12 students regardless of immigration status (*Plyler v. Doe*, 457 U.S. 202, 1982). Tuition Equity simply extends this access by making higher education more accessible to undocumented students. Oregon's employment base stands to become better educated and more competitive, our universities benefit through increased revenues and our overall tax base increases due to increased earning potential. It is now our turn to follow the lead of the 10 states which have already enacted similar legislation.

Last but not least, providing tuition equity is simply the right thing to do. The children of Oregon's



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undocumented residents are not here out of choice. For many, this is the only home they have ever known. They are invested in our society and our lives. The hundreds of students who made their voices known as the Senate debated the Tuition Equity bill were not asking for a handout. They were merely asking for an opportunity to continue their education so they can move a little closer to fulfilling their dreams and contributing to the state they call home -- in other words, to help us all become a little better off.

Please let your legislators know that you support the Tuition Equity bill. Ask them to vote “yes” when it comes time for them to make their voices heard on this important legislation.

*John J. “Ski” Sygielski is president of Mt. Hood Community College which enrolls more than 33,000 students each year and is the fourth largest of 17 community colleges in Oregon. He is also chairman of the board for the American Association of Community Colleges.*

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## **Wisconsin 'dreamers' deserve tuition equity**

By Daniel Lopez and Maricela Aguilar

March 17, 2014

Maricela and I both call Wisconsin home. We grew up in this great state, went to high school here and are Wisconsinites through and through. Yet throughout our lives, neither of us has been eligible for in-state college tuition rates.

In-state tuition for undocumented students became available here in 2009, after years of organizing by immigrant youth. Unfortunately, in 2011, it was repealed by Gov. Scott Walker, who effectively shut the door to higher education for undocumented students (called "Dreamers") in the state. It has been three years since then, and we believe it's time this door is blown wide open again.

My family moved from Mexico City to Wisconsin when I was 4, and we have lived here since. My parents have paid their taxes every year they have worked here. My dream was to study mechanical engineering at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, as well as try out for its track team.

The moment I realized I would have to pay over \$26,000 annually to attend, which is 2.5 times more than the in-state tuition of \$10,400, my dreams were crushed. I no longer felt there was purpose in finishing high school if I couldn't go to a UW school afterward. Very few Wisconsin families could dream of affording \$26,000 annually for out-of-state tuition without loans or financial aid, including mine.

The opportunity to undo this injustice is on the horizon. A bill that would allow undocumented students who meet certain criteria the chance to pay resident tuition rates was recently introduced in the state Legislature by state Rep. JoCasta Zamarripa (D-Milwaukee) — Assembly Bill 785. It now sits in the Colleges and Universities Committee.

Those eligible would be undocumented students like Maricela and myself — students who deserve the right to fulfill their educational dreams in their own home state and in their own public institutions.

Opponents of the bill fear that we would be getting a free ride. But the reality is the bill would only give us a chance to pay the same rate as our Wisconsin peers. We still would have to come up with the money to pay the in-state tuition rate, since we still would be ineligible for federal and state financial



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aid, most private bank loans and a majority of scholarships.

This type of legislation is not new. Sixteen states have tuition equity laws, and Florida and New York are in the process of passing their own.

Government fiscal estimates for AB 785 show that the bill would not create additional state or local costs. This means taxpayers would not be subsidizing the higher education of undocumented students, since it would come at no cost to the state — and in fact could create revenue through increased enrollment in public universities.

Wisconsin has everything to gain from a tuition equity bill such as AB 785: a better educated population, increased revenue for public universities due to higher enrollment, increased future tax revenue from students who now would be able to obtain degrees and the list goes on and on.

Let's pass AB 785 and move Wisconsin forward for everyone.

*Daniel Lopez is a senior at Marquette University High School in Milwaukee and a student leader with Youth Empowered in the Struggle (YES), the youth arm of Voces de la Frontera. He hopes to attend a UW school after his graduation in May. Maricela Aguilar is a graduate of Marquette University and is pursuing a master's degree in public policy at Brandeis University.*

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## **Our state should pass a tuition equity law**

*April 22, 2015*

Former Secretary of Labor Robert Reich spoke here recently about growing income inequality in the United States. He stressed the importance of education and a highly trained workforce to attract good jobs and raise people out of poverty.

In North Carolina, one group of highly motivated students, often graduating from high school at the top of their class, has been denied the opportunity to pursue post-secondary education. These are immigrants, brought here as children, who have graduated from North Carolina high schools only to find their future blocked because they must pay out-of-state tuition despite living in North Carolina for years. This means tuition bills as much as four times that of in-state tuition.

State Sen. Fletcher Hartsell has introduced SB 463 to change this bad policy. If it is passed, North Carolina would join 18 other states with policies allowing qualified, undocumented students to pay in-state tuition.

It is known that having a college degree boosts a worker's income and that a well-trained labor force creates a better climate for business and increases tax revenues.

North Carolina should pass a tuition-equity law and become a leader in educational opportunities rather than a state with a policy that leaves many unable to reach their potential.

Sue Jezorek  
Greensboro