

September 19, 2007

Dear Senator,

We urge you to support the Durbin-Hagel-Lugar DREAM Act amendment to H.R. 1585, the Department of Defense authorization bill.

The DREAM Act is legislation we have long supported that would provide a 6-year path to legal status starting after high school graduation for individuals brought to the U.S. more than 5 years ago as children. To qualify for a green card they would have to demonstrate good moral character and within the 6-year period graduate from community college, attend two years towards a four-year degree, or serve at least two years in the U.S. military.

The young people who would benefit from the DREAM Act had no say in the decision to come to this country, but because they have grown up here they are likely to remain, even though the law currently provides no mechanism for them to adjust to legal status. They include high school valedictorians, honors students, class presidents, and student athletes. The question posed by the DREAM Act is whether it is better for them to be here illegally and uneducated, or legally, educated and free to fully contribute to our common future.

We continue to support a comprehensive solution to our immigration problems, but life goes on and these young people cannot put their lives on hold while Congress debates the complicated issues involved in such legislation. The DREAM Act eligible students who graduated from high school in 2001—when the DREAM Act was first proposed in Congress—are now in their mid-20's. Another 65,000 DREAM eligible students will graduate this academic year. It is imperative to take them off of the field of battle of the immigration wars by enacting the DREAM Act this year. Passage of the DREAM Act on H.R. 1585 could represent a decisive step towards such enactment.

Respectfully,

ACORN

American Association of State Colleges & Universities

American Baptist Churches USA

American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees

American Federation of Teachers

American Immigration Lawyers Association

Anti-Defamation League

Arab American Institute

Asian American Justice Center

Asian Pacific American Labor Alliance

Association of Community College Trustees

Association of Jesuit Colleges and Universities

Church World Service, Immigration and Refugee Program

Coalition on Human Needs

Commission on Social Action of Reform Judaism

Democracia Ahora

Episcopal Migration Ministries

Farmworker Justice
First Focus
Gamaliel Foundation
Glenmary Commission on Justice
Hate Free Zone
Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society
Hispanic Association of Colleges & Universities
Hmong National Development
"I Have a Dream" Foundation
Immigrant and Refugee Rights Project Committee for Civil Rights
Immigrant Legal Resource Center
Irish Apostolate USA
Jesuit Conference USA
Jewish Council for Public Affairs
Jewish Council on Urban Affairs
Jewish Labor Committee
Leadership Conference on Civil Rights
League of United Latin American Citizens
Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service
Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund
Migrant Legal Action Program
National Advocacy Center of the Sisters of the Good Shepherd
National Alliance of Latin American & Caribbean Communities
National Association for College Admission Counseling
National Association of Latino Elected and Appointed Officials
National Association of State Directors of Migrant Education
National Council of Jewish Women
National Council of La Raza
National Council for Community and Education Partnerships
National Education Association
National Immigrant Justice Center
National Immigration Forum
National Immigration Law Center
National Korean American Service & Education Consortium
NETWORK, A National Catholic Social Justice Lobby
People For the American Way
Presbyterian Church (USA)
Refugee and Immigration Program
Service Employees International Union
Sisters of Mercy of the Americas
Sojourners/Call to Renewal
Southeast Asia Resource Action Center
Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages, Inc.
U.S. Committee for Refugees and Immigrants
Unitarian Universalist Association of Congregations
UNITE HERE!

United Church of Christ Justice and Witness Ministries

United Farm Workers of America

United States Hispanic Chamber of Commerce

United States Student Association