



THE STATE EDUCATION DEPARTMENT / THE UNIVERSITY OF THE STATE OF NEW YORK / ALBANY, NY 12234

COMMISSIONER OF EDUCATION
PRESIDENT OF THE UNIVERSITY OF THE STATE OF NEW YORK

October 18, 2011

Hon. Senator Charles E. Schumer
322 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington D.C. 20510

Dear Senator Schumer:

The New York State Board of Regents today gave approval to endorse passage of (H.R. 1842/S. 952) the Development, Relief and Education for Alien Minors (DREAM) Act. On behalf of the Regents, we write to urge you to support this important legislation.

Hundreds of thousands of New York public school students do not have legal status -- an estimated 345,000 of the K-12 public school students in New York are children of undocumented immigrants. New York wisely invests in these students, from early English language programs to comprehensive college and career readiness initiatives. These investments have led to increased graduation rates and improved test scores. The overarching goal is to improve the education and skill level of all New York's children. We want to give them a future, but that future can look grim when these young people are not allowed to pursue higher education, training, and legitimate careers.

The DREAM Act is broadly supported bipartisan legislation. It's narrowly tailored to provide a pathway to citizenship for immigrant alien minors. Under the current law, these young people generally derive their immigration status solely from their parents, and if their parents are undocumented, most of these children have no mechanism to obtain legal residency, even if they have lived most of their lives in the United States. Right now, no matter how long they've lived here or how young they were when their parents brought them here, these students are condemned to a life in the shadows, working under the table, not paying taxes, frequently unable to go to college, not participating in society. These undocumented immigrant children can work hard, overcome great adversity, and excel in school yet, through no fault of their own, they are condemned to a future that is undeniably circumscribed by current immigration law.

The DREAM Act will provide a path to legal status for these children. It would apply only to immigrant alien students who came to the U.S. at age 15 or younger at least five years before the date of the bill's enactment and who have maintained good moral character since entering the U.S. Students would receive conditional permanent resident status when they graduated from a U.S. high school, or earned a GED in the U.S. and went on to attend a U.S. college or serve in the U.S. military.

It's not an easy path, but for these young New Yorkers, it's a path out of the shadows. These young people have shown remarkable resilience and fortitude; that resilience should be accompanied by opportunity. The DREAM Act is the key to that opportunity.

Sincerely,

Merryl H. Tisch
Chancellor

Dr. John B. King, Jr.
Commissioner