

CHILDREN'S ADVOCATES URGE PASSAGE OF THE DREAM ACT

June 28, 2011

Dear Member of Congress,

On behalf of the undersigned national and state children's advocacy organizations, we write in strong support of the DREAM Act (S. 952/ H.R. 1842). It is critical that Congress take immediate action to pass this important piece of legislation, and we urge you to support the bill.

The DREAM Act is a common sense proposal that would provide undocumented youth that have grown up in the U.S. with the opportunity to earn their legal status provided they came here before the age of 16, have lived in the country at least five years from the date of passage, maintain good moral character, and complete two years of college or military service. Each year, approximately 65,000 talented students graduate from American high schools and find their dreams of college deferred due to their immigration status. Every day these children also must live in fear of being separated from their families and deported to a country they may no longer remember.

The reasons to pass the DREAM Act are many. First and foremost, the passage of the bill is the right thing to do for children. In fact, nearly half of all potential DREAM Act beneficiaries are children currently enrolled in our elementary and secondary schools. Through no choice of their own, DREAM students were brought to our country at a young age, and for many this is the only country they have ever known. These are children who have grown up in our communities, excelled in our schools, and like their native-born peers, consider themselves the future doctors, soldiers, teachers, and engineers that will resolve the many challenges we face today as a nation. Thus, the DREAM Act can help secure our future economy through the development of a highly educated workforce.

Since the DREAM Act was originally introduced in 2001, hundreds of thousands of hardworking immigrant students have faced limited access to a college education and have been denied the opportunity to contribute socially and economically to our nation. Due to inaction at the federal level, several states have been left to address this issue by passing their own legislation to provide in-state tuition to qualifying undocumented students in their state. However, Congressional action is necessary to ensure that these talented students are able to legalize their status and become fully contributing members of society. If Congress fails to act quickly, thousands of more children will be forced to face an uncertain future.

As organizations committed to the ideals that all our children deserve the opportunity to dream and achieve their full potential, we urge you to support the DREAM Act.

Sincerely,

Action for Children North Carolina
Advocates for Children and Youth, Maryland
Arkansas Advocates for Children and Families
American Humane Association
America's Promise Alliance
Center for Law and Social Policy (CLASP)
Center for Public Policy Priorities, Texas

Children's Action Alliance, Arizona
Children's Alliance of New Hampshire
Children's Alliance, Washington
Children's Defense Fund
Child and Family Policy Center, Iowa
Children First for Oregon
CHILDREN NOW, California
Connecticut Voices for Children
First Focus Campaign for Children
First Star
Forum for Youth Investment
Foster Care Alumni of America
Kentucky Youth Advocates
Kids in Need of Defense (KIND)
Latin American Youth Center, DC
Maine Children's Alliance
Metro Organizations for People, Colorado
Michigan's Children
Mississippi Center for Justice
MomsRising
National Association for the Education of Homeless Children and Youth (NAEHCY)
The National Crittenton Foundation
New Mexico Voices for Children
Pegasus Legal Services for Children, New Mexico
PICO Colorado United
Public Citizens for Children and Youth, Philadelphia
Rhode Island KIDS COUNT
Sargent Shriver National Center on Poverty Law, Illinois
SC Appleseed Legal Justice Center, South Carolina
Statewide Parent Advocacy Network, New Jersey
Voices for America's Children
Voices for Ohio's Children
Voices for Utah Children
Voices for Virginia's Children