

CITY COUNCIL
CITY OF NEW YORK

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TRANSCRIPT OF THE MINUTES

of the

COMMITTEES ON IMMIGRATION AND HIGHER EDUCATION

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March 20, 2012
Start: 1:30 p.m.
Recess: 4:55 p.m.

HELD AT: Council Chambers
City Hall

B E F O R E:
DANIEL DROMM
YDANIS RODRIGUEZ
Chairpersons

COUNCIL MEMBERS:
Speaker Christine C. Quinn
Council Member Charles Barron
Council Member Gale A. Brewer
Council Member Fernando Cabrera
Council Member Mathieu Eugene
Council Member Deborah L. Rose
Council Member Larry B. Seabrook
Council Member Jumaane D. Williams

A P P E A R A N C E S (CONTINUED)

Francisco Moya
Assembly Member
New York State Assembly

Catherine Tabaris
Student, Immigration Rights Advocate

Roxanne Way
Representative
New York State Leadership Council

Aline Herrera
Student, Immigration Rights Advocate

Giovanni Lopez
Student, Immigration Rights Advocate

Cordell Clear
Chief of Staff
Office of Senator Bill Perkins

Rocio Cruz
Chief of Staff
Office of Assembly Member Guillermo Linares

Carina Bergal
Representative
Office of Manhattan Borough President Scott Stringer

Suman Raghunathan
Director of Policy and Strategic Partnerships
Progressive States Network

Jessica Orozco
Director of Immigration and Civic Engagement
Hispanic Federation

Michael Mandel
Immigration Lawyer
Co-Chair, Advocacy Committee, New York Chapter
American Immigration Lawyers Association

A P P E A R A N C E S (CONTINUED)

Camille Mackler
Immigration Attorney
Member, American Immigration Lawyers Association

Bethany Lee
Attorney
Asian American Legal Defense and Education Fund

Tony Choi
Undocumented Korean American

John Demanga
Student, BMCC, Borough of Manhattan Community College
Employee, New York Public Interest Research Group

Natalie Lopez
Undocumented student
Baruch College

Christopher Chavez
Undocumented Student
Lehman College

Erica Red
Undocumented Mexican-American student

Mike Fabricant
Treasurer, Professional Staff Congress
City University faculty and staff union
Faculty member, Hunter College

Omar Murray
International student from Jamaica
Active in Student Government

Sophia Carreno
Interim Communications and College Relations
Specialist
CUNY Citizenship Now

A P P E A R A N C E S (CONTINUED)

John Moreno-Escobar
Executive Director/Founder
Latino Youth for Higher Education

Catherine Ardilla
Student Advocate
Latino Youth for Higher Education

Jackie Vimo
Director of Advocacy
New York Immigration Coalition

Johan Garcia
Student Investment Ambassador
City University of New York, Ernesto Malave Leadership
Academy

Kelly Carpenter
Sister, Director and Attorney
Cabrini Immigrant Services

Christina Chang
Advocacy and Organizing Association
Minkwon Center for Community Action

Sneha Goud
Development Associate
South Asian Youth Action

Cassandra Guzman
Member
Make the Road

Jong Min
Undocumented student

Ann Marie Schroder-Gail
President, Medgar Evers College Student Government
Association
Founder and Chair, Medgar Evers College United Body of
International and Undocumented Students Club

A P P E A R A N C E S (CONTINUED)

Alden Nesbitt
Member, The Black Institute
Partner, the Dream Coalition

Janet Yates
Member
The Black Institute

Yahida Savedra
Undocumented student

Aisha Mamora
Membership Organizer
Desis Rising Up and Moving

Lionel Brower
Youth Organizer
Member, Vamos Unidos

Russell Lum
Justice and Peace Representative
Little Sisters of the Assumption

May Lee
Executive Director
Chinese Progressive Association

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[gavel]

CHAIRPERSON RODRIGUEZ: Good

morning, and welcome to--afternoon, right? Good
afternoon and welcome to the joint meeting doing,
meeting on the Committee of Immigration and
Committee [audio cuts out] Higher Education. My
name is [audio cuts out] Ydanis [audio cuts out]
Immigration is Danny Dromm. Before we begin, I, I
would like to recognize my [audio cuts out]
Council Member Seabrook and [audio cuts out] and
now I would like to call on our Speaker [audio
cuts out] The Committee on Immigration-- The
Committee on Immigration and Higher Education are
here today to hear testimony about the
resolutions. One resolution number 803 calls upon
the New York State Legislature to pass and, to
pass, and the Governor to sign the New York Dream
Act, which would grant certain benefits to
eligible undocumented immigrants. The other
resolution number 1219 calls upon the New York
State Legislature to pass and the Governor to sign
legislation establishing the New York Dream Fund
Commission, which will advance education
opportunity to children of immigrants through

1 this, through a scholarship program for higher
2 education. The system rules above the City and
3 the State University of New York, allow
4 undocumented immigrants to attend their community
5 and senior colleges. Furthermore, this
6 institution enable such students to pay in-state
7 tuition, regardless of immigrant status. However,
8 they are still eligible for a State or federal
9 funded financial aid for certain scholarships,
10 thereby making the ability to pay for a college
11 education and earn a college degree even more
12 challenging. As of fall 2011, 7,225 undocumented
13 students are enrolled in CUNY. This is, these are
14 students who have spent much of their life in the
15 United States, and who like so many immigrants,
16 including myself, want to make a better life for
17 themselves and for their families in our City. By
18 not giving access to the same available to other
19 students, we are making it the much more difficult
20 for them to achieve these goals, goals that if
21 accomplished will benefit our society and our
22 economy. The current version of the New York
23 Dream Act will provide undocumented students with
24 access to a State, city, town or village funded
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2 financially aid programs, grant loan or
3 scholarship. The student that would be eligible
4 for such aid would have to establish that they,
5 one, receive a high school diploma or is
6 equivalent; two, and enter the United States
7 before turning 18; three, are under 35 years old,
8 35 years of age; and four, have not been convicted
9 of violent felony; and reside in the New York, in
10 New York for at least two years before the
11 effective dates of the bill. The Dream Up Fund
12 Commission will be required to raise money in
13 order to award a scholarship to eligible students.
14 In order to eligible for a scholarship from the
15 Dream Fund, an applicant must at a minimum have
16 one, reside within, with his or her parents or
17 guardian while attending high school in New York;
18 two, graduate from high school or receive the
19 equivalent of a high school diploma in New York
20 State; three, attend a high school in New York, in
21 New York for at least three years as of the date
22 of, of he or she graduate from high school or
23 receive equivalent of a high school diploma; four,
24 have at least one parent or guardian who immigrate
25 to the United States. The bill will also allow

1 individuals with a taxpayer identification number
2 to open a New York 529 Family Tuition Account.
3 The Dream Fund Commission and the Fund itself are
4 to be financed entirely by the private
5 contribution. While I've described the details of
6 the bills, I haven't done just, I haven't done
7 justice to the huge difference, they would make in
8 thousand of young, to young people lives. In
9 today's society, a college degree is more than
10 ever required to move into middle class. By not
11 supporting the effort undocumented young people to
12 obtain a higher education, we are saying to them,
13 they don't deserve a place in the middle class.
14 By not making the investment in the portion of our
15 New York City students, we are saying, "We don't
16 feel they deserve the same investments." I am
17 saying to you today, that undocumented students do
18 deserve this investment and that I will continue
19 working with Speaker and my Council colleague, to
20 lift up, to let our State legislator know New York
21 City is City of immigrants, and we will do
22 everything we can to support the passage of this
23 bill, which will help make the dream of
24 undocumented student a reality. Now, I'm calling
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2 on my Co-Chairman, Danny Dromm.

3 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you very
4 much, Council Member Rodriguez. Good afternoon.
5 My name is Daniel Dromm, I'm Chair of the City
6 Council's Committee on Immigration. I would like
7 to thank Council Member Rodriguez, Chair of the
8 Committee on Higher Education, for Co-Chairing
9 this hearing with me today. I would like to
10 recognize that we are being joined by our Speaker,
11 Christine Quinn, who has been extremely supportive
12 of these resolutions and this issue. Two year
13 ago, Council Member Rodriguez and I came together
14 to hold a hearing on a resolution in support of
15 the Federal Dream Act. Many were disappointed
16 because despite the tremendous nationwide efforts
17 made to enact the Dream Act, the bill did not
18 pass. Fortunately, however, New York State
19 representatives have come together to address the
20 needs of our undocumented youth and immigrant
21 families that want to improve their lives through
22 the pursuit of higher education. It is for this
23 reason that I am so pleased about the resolutions
24 before the Committees today. Today the Committees
25 will hear Resolution Number 803, sponsored by

1 Council Member Rodriguez, calling on the New York
2 State Legislature to pass and the Governor to sign
3 the New York Dream Act, sponsored by Senator
4 Perkins and Assemblyman Linares. If enacted, the
5 New York State Dream Act would provide
6 undocumented students with access to State aid,
7 locally, state and locally funded forms of
8 financial aid, so they can pursue college
9 education. In addition, we will hear Resolution
10 1219, calling on the State Legislature to pass and
11 the Governor to sign legislation introduced by
12 Senator Espaillat and Assemblyman Moya, that would
13 establish the New York Dream Fund Commission. I
14 introduced this Resolution because it addresses
15 the needs of the children of immigrants including
16 the children of undocumented immigrants. The
17 creation of a Dream Fund Commission would ensure
18 that there would be a designated office in New
19 York State, dedicated to advancing the academic
20 opportunities of first generation New Yorkers,
21 those with at least one immigrant parent, through
22 scholarship opportunities. The Dream Fund
23 Commission would be required to raise private
24 dollars for the Dream Fund in order to award
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1 scholarships to eligible individuals.

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3 Establishing the New York Dream Fund Commission
4 will advance the educational opportunities of
5 immigrant youths through scholarship programs for
6 higher education. Additionally, this legislation
7 would also allow individuals with a taxpayer
8 identification number to open a New York 529
9 Family Tuition Account. This afternoon, we will
10 be looking at the benefits that these two pieces
11 of legislation would provide to immigrant youth.
12 New York City is home to three million immigrants,
13 and as a representative of one of the largest
14 immigrant communities in the five boroughs,
15 today's hearing is of great importance to me,
16 since so many of my constituents could benefit
17 from the passage of these bills. The impact on
18 today's immigrant youth is increasingly important
19 during these hard economic times. The New York
20 City Council has a strong history of supporting
21 immigrant New Yorkers and their families because
22 of their positive contributions to New York City.
23 The Council has a strong history of supporting New
24 York's immigrants and today will be no different.
25 Together, the New York Dream Act and the Dream

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2 Fund Commission would help immigrant students
3 pursue higher education, and help them to continue
4 to contribute to this great City. Both would help
5 our State and our City's immigrant families as
6 they urge the next generation to pursue higher
7 education. I would like to thank everyone for
8 attending this afternoon's hearing, and I look
9 forward to hearing from our Dreamers and our
10 advocates. And now, I would like to turn it over
11 to our Speaker, Christine Quinn.

12 SPEAKER QUINN: [off mic] Thank you
13 very--whoops [on mic] Thank you very much, Danny,
14 and again thank you, Danny, for the outstanding
15 job you're doing Chairing our Immigration Affairs
16 Committee, and thank you Chair Rodriguez for
17 introducing these Resolutions and for the work
18 you're doing Chair, as Chair of our Higher
19 Education Committee. The United States was
20 founded on the belief that the pursuit of
21 happiness is not a privilege but an inalienable
22 right. Today, immigrant students and immigrant
23 families face insurmountable obstacles to that
24 pursuit of happiness, and therefore insurmountable
25 obstacles to achieving the American Dream. The

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2 passes of, the passage of legislation that would
3 establish the New York Dream Act into law and the
4 New York Dream Fund Commission, will help make
5 dreams finally become realities for New York City
6 immigrant families and really finally make access
7 to that happiness and the American Dream a
8 reality. New York has always been a leader on
9 immigration issues. Let's continue to be that
10 leader, by moving these two very important pieces
11 of legislation forward and into law. In doing so,
12 thousands of young people from immigrant families
13 throughout New York will be able to access higher
14 education in order to improve their lives,
15 contribute more fully to our City, State and
16 country. We must not continue to shy away from
17 this great responsibility of shaping our future
18 and providing the potential for economic
19 stability. In my State of the City address last
20 month, I talked about one of my grandmothers,
21 Nelly Lancer. She came from Ireland, as all of my
22 grandmothers did, and grandfathers did, wanting to
23 pursue the American Dream. None of my four
24 grandparents had any type of formal education, one
25 of my grandmothers went to about 8th grade, most

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2 of them didn't go past 3rd grade. All four of
3 their children went on to college, two of their
4 children went on to get masters degrees. New York
5 is filled with young people just like Nelly
6 Lancer, who want to achieve that kind of a dream
7 for their children. That is why in that most
8 important speech I give every year, I called for
9 the passage of the New York State Dream Act, and I
10 am committed to working with my colleagues, Danny
11 and Ydanis, and everyone else, to making it a
12 reality. But today we're going to hear from the
13 most important folks as it relates to this bill,
14 from students who have come to the United States
15 in search of a better life, which means a better
16 education, and then a better future and success in
17 the United States for them and their families.
18 Although some of the folks you'll hear from are
19 able to pay for college through loans or
20 scholarships, most cannot and therefore cannot
21 easily afford the education they've dreamed of
22 their whole lives. Unfortunately, some of them
23 wind up having to take time off from school, or
24 leave college altogether. Families will have to
25 make that horrible choice. This child will get to

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2 go to college, but this one won't. Why should we
3 put parents and families in that position? Some
4 will leave college altogether, because of their
5 documentation status made them ineligible for
6 other forms of financial aid. Without any
7 financial assistance, the tuition is just too
8 expensive for many. We know that higher education
9 beyond it being the right thing to do to offer to
10 people, we also know it has economic benefits for
11 the students and for society. According to the
12 Fiscal Policy Institute, the median income of a
13 New York State worker with a bachelor's degree, is
14 \$25,000 higher per year than for a worker with
15 just a high school degree. And those with a two
16 year degree earned an average \$10,000 higher per
17 year. The benefits are clear. That's why we, I,
18 I and the vast majority of my colleagues, strongly
19 support these two important pieces of legislation,
20 the Dream Act and the Dream Fund, that ease the
21 burden placed on immigrant families that are
22 trying to send their children to college. It's to
23 make resources available for students and
24 immigrant families, because obtaining a college
25 degree will ultimately better their lives and

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2 their families' futures and our City's future.
3 Making it affordable will help remove some of the
4 roadblocks one may face when determining whether
5 to pursue a higher education. I just want to say,
6 we have a great history as an immigrant city. But
7 if we don't remain committed to it, that can
8 change really in a heartbeat. And the best way we
9 can send a message we're committed to that as the
10 City Council is doing everything we can to get the
11 State Legislature to pass these bills. And I want
12 to thank again Danny and Ydanis and all my
13 colleagues for their work.

14 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you very
15 much, Speaker Quinn. I want to say that we have
16 received some written testimony which will be
17 entered into the record from the Emerald Isle
18 Immigration Center, and from the United Federation
19 of Teachers. And at this time, I would like to
20 call up the main sponsor in the New York State
21 Assembly, for the Dream Fund Act, and that is
22 Assembly Member Francisco Moya, my Assembly
23 Member.

24 [applause]

25 [pause, laughter, background

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comments]

FRANCISCO MOYA: Thank you, Madam Speaker. [pause]

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Whenever you're ready.

FRANCISCO MOYA: Thank you, Madam Speaker, thank you, Chairman Rodriguez and thank you, Chairman Dromm, for really taking this issue to the level that it's taken here today. Obviously this is a very important issue for myself, but I'm glad that the leadership here in the Council is really leading the way here in this City for us to continue the fight in Albany. So, I'm very proud to not only be here but also to have you as my, my Council Member, as well. I'm here today to submit testimony in support of the New York City Council Resolution Number 1219, which calls upon the New York City Legislature to pass, and the Governor to sign, the legislation establishing the New York Dream Fund Commission. The reason so many people from across the globe come to this country is simple, it's opportunity. And it's opportunity to grow, to learn and to succeed. That is what drew my parents here from

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2 Ecuador, and what continues to draw able and
3 energetic people from near and far each year.
4 Yet, for the children of undocumented immigrants,
5 opportunities in higher education are blocked by
6 the very real obstacles. By law, the basic
7 financial resources that make college accessible
8 for so many young people, federal student loans
9 and grants are systematically denied to the
10 children of many new immigrants due to the lack of
11 documentation by their parents. And with some
12 \$6.1 million Hispanic youth living in poverty in
13 this country, according to the report from the Pew
14 Hispanic Center, denying these children resources
15 for college denies them all the opportunity to
16 achieve a good quality education. While there are
17 efforts underway to change the law to give the
18 children of undocumented immigrants access to
19 financial resources for college, most notably the
20 proposed federal GMAT [phonetic], support for
21 these new laws and an end to the legal obstacle
22 remains elusive. :That is why I've been working
23 with a coalition of advocates to pass legislation
24 which will create the New York State Dream Fund
25 Commission, which I introduced A8689, modeled on

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2 similar funds that have taken place in California
3 and Illinois. New York's Dream Fund will create a
4 State sanctioned, not-for-profit commission, that
5 will collect private donations and turn that money
6 into scholarships funding for children of new and
7 undocumented immigrants. Our legislation
8 currently has 53 members signed on to sponsor this
9 legislation in the Assembly, and that number is
10 still growing. The Dream Fund will make the dream
11 of college education accessible to the members of
12 our society, who are now denied access to all the
13 opportunities a college education can provide.
14 And it will do so without any cost to the State.
15 Our legislation will also allow new immigration
16 families to create tuition savings accounts, if
17 they choose, as other means to pay for college.
18 Currently, a social security number is required to
19 open up such an account, making it impossible for
20 undocumented immigrants to do so. The bill will
21 allow accounts to be created with just a tax ID
22 number, enabling families to save their own money
23 for their children's tuition, college tuition. It
24 is my hop and it is my dream that the New York
25 Dream Fund will allow the children of immigrants

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2 to reach their true potential and become the next
3 generation of doctors, lawyers, teachers and
4 scholars. If we can make that possible for them,
5 it will benefit us all. When that happens, the
6 promise of opportunity that drew my parents here
7 will truly be realized. And I just want to say
8 this, that as you all do, I believe in a New York
9 where your immigration status should never be a
10 barrier for young, undocumented students, to
11 attaining a good quality education. This is the
12 land of opportunity that's welcome its immigrants
13 from distant shores and it's not just from South
14 America, it's from all over the world. I've been
15 honored as being the first elected Ecuadorian
16 American, not just to the State of New York, but
17 to this country. And it's taken us a long way to
18 get to that point. But it is because the future
19 elected officials, the future leaders of our
20 country, sit here today, in this room, and their
21 testimony, which they have come to Albany, time
22 and time again, to really share the stories that
23 are truly touching, and can almost drive you to
24 tears. But it is the reality that they're living
25 today. And we need to make sure that they're no

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2 longer dreaming of an act, but that they will be
3 living it. And we can do this together. My
4 colleague in the Assembly, Guillermo Linares, has
5 introduced the Dream Act, and together we've been
6 working hand-in-hand to make sure that the Dream
7 legislation is going to become a reality in this
8 session. So, I thank you and I applaud you all
9 for your leadership here in the Council, for
10 really taking this forward. And I truly just want
11 to applaud all of the dreamers and everyone that's
12 here in this room, the advocates who have done a
13 tremendous job of taking this issue from nowhere
14 to bringing it back to the level where it needs to
15 be taken, so that we can pass this bill in the
16 Senate, and in the Assembly, and also make sure
17 that as we go into the federal elections that,
18 that the President of the United States, who
19 campaigned on the promise of a federal Dream Act,
20 will live up to that promise, as well. Thank you
21 very much.

22 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you,
23 Assembly Member Moya. [applause] I'd like to now
24 recognize that we've been joined by my colleague,
25 Debbie Rose, from Staten Island, and Jumaane

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2 Williams from Brooklyn. And to ask Council Member
3 Fernando Cabrera, he has a few questions. I just
4 want to remind everyone we have to hold you to
5 three minutes today. I have to be very strict
6 because we have like 36 people wanting to give
7 testimony. So, otherwise we'll be here till
8 midnight.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER CABRERA: Thank,
10 thank you so much, to both Chairs. Welcome,
11 Assembly Member.

12 FRANCISCO MOYA: Thank you, thank
13 you.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER CABRERA: It's
15 always good to see you. Since I only have three
16 minutes, let me be quick here. How does the
17 California Dream Act compares to the New York one?
18 What are the differences?

19 FRANCISCO MOYA: So, there's,
20 there's several, and you know, obviously I'm
21 talking about my Dream Fund, and I, you know, I'd
22 like to leave that to my colleague, Assembly
23 Member Linares, to answer that question more,
24 because that's his, his bill not mine.

25 COUNCIL MEMBER CABRERA: Right.

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2 FRANCISCO MOYA: But I think that
3 here, in the, in the Dream Act, they're really
4 asking for the tuition assistance to come in.
5 They've done a great study that shows that the
6 cost to the State would be \$17.5 million
7 additional to adding that there. I think we're
8 on, on a real pathway to making sure that we can
9 achieve that. I think that we've continued to
10 work hand-in-hand, 'cause as we've seen in all the
11 states that actually have any type of Dream Acts,
12 they both had a Dream Act and a fund, that have
13 gone together. A lot of times what we've seen is,
14 some of the testimony that has come in from the
15 hearing that we had in the Assembly, was that
16 there's also children whose parents are
17 undocumented but were born here in this country,
18 and still don't have a social security number.
19 They actually have to wait a year to apply for
20 TAP, because their parents don't have a social
21 security number. So they would have to wait till
22 they turn 18 years old, file as an independent,
23 then go back in. So now you're, now there's a, a
24 lapse in at least a year for them trying to attain
25 any type of tuition assistance. This is why I

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2 think these two bills really go hand-in-hand,
3 because they really will be able to, to allow the
4 students that really need the money, they, the
5 funding will be there. And I think that we will
6 truly have a, a historic moment here in the State
7 of New York when we can see both of these
8 legislations be enacted into law.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER CABRERA: I noticed
10 that you mentioned how many Assembly Member has
11 signed onto the bill. It's great.

12 FRANCISCO MOYA: Yeah.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER CABRERA: But what
14 about the Senate? How many have signed on?

15 FRANCISCO MOYA: So, we now are in
16 the process of possibly having a majority Senate
17 member take the bill. And that would give us a
18 great opportunity for us to really see it passing
19 in the House. And I think that it's just a
20 testament to what's been working on both levels of
21 both pieces of legislation, with a lot of the
22 dreamers and the tireless work of the advocates
23 that they've done to really go out there and, and
24 really present the case to a lot of the Republican
25 members of the Senate.

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2 COUNCIL MEMBER CABRERA: So, you're
3 saying if the Senate stays the same as it is right
4 now, that your prognosis is that it will pass the
5 Senate?

6 FRANCISCO MOYA: I would hope that
7 we would see both of these pass the Senate this
8 year.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER CABRERA: Okay.
10 Thank you so much.

11 FRANCISCO MOYA: No, thank you.

12 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Okay, and thank
13 you, Council Member Cabrera. Now, to my colleague
14 from Brooklyn, Council Member Charles Barron.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: Thank you
16 very much. I just wanted to, you know, we often
17 mention it's not going to cost anything or \$17
18 million is pittance. But I was reading Senator
19 Bill Perkins' press statement, and I thought he
20 had some interesting facts that undocumented
21 immigrants pay over \$662 million in State taxes,
22 \$104 million in personal income tax, \$95 million
23 in property tax, \$463 million in sales tax. So
24 we're not asking for no favors here. [laughter]
25 We're not asking you to do us a nicey-nicey. You

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2 know, how about giving us back some of that money
3 that we put into the State in the first place.

4 [applause] And 17--you know, it's interesting,
5 people could, could die for this country, people
6 could pay taxes to this country, but then when it
7 comes to getting something back, we have to go
8 through all of these changes. And the Speaker
9 mentioned about her immigrant past, but when the
10 complexion of immigration changes, it becomes a
11 little more difficult, when the immigrants are
12 coming from Africa and the Caribbean and Latin
13 America, then it becomes a little more different.
14 Difficult. I know the Irish, Polish, Italians,
15 they did have discrimination, but there was Ellis
16 Island processing. People now, it's much more
17 difficult. So, in the event that there is a
18 difficult struggle in the Assembly, and I hope
19 not, I just hope, and I say this to my wife,
20 Assemblywoman Inez Barron often--

21 FRANCISCO MOYA: Yes, great
22 colleague.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: --that we
24 have to use power. And if we don't have power,
25 leverage. There're 90 Democratic Assembly people

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2 and about 60 Republicans. But there's 32 black,
3 Latino and Asian members. If they were to say to
4 the 32 Democrats, that if we, if you don't
5 prioritize our bill, this particular one, then
6 you're only going to have 58 when you go against
7 the 60 Republicans, if you have to go that route.
8 It is that important, that when we can't get
9 compromise, and we can't get understanding, then
10 we have to get, use leverage and power. So I just
11 wanted to share that with you. And hope that--

12 FRANCISCO MOYA: Thank you.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: --you are
14 successful. 'Cause when you're successful, we're
15 all successful.

16 FRANCISCO MOYA: Thank you,
17 Councilman.

18 [applause]

19 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you,
20 Council Member Barron. And now Council Member
21 Gale Brewer from Manhattan.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Thank you
23 very much. We're all obviously very supportive.
24 So my question is, when you talk to your
25 colleagues, what in the world do they say when

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they're not for it?

FRANCISCO MOYA: Well, I, to be honest with you, we've, we've had, what is it, three Republicans that have signed on so far. I think--

COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: I can't imagine why the others don't, really, it's just--

FRANCISCO MOYA: It's, look, it's--

COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: --
challenging.

FRANCISCO MOYA: --it's obviously a struggle, I've requested myself to be, to allow me to go and speak to the Minority Conference on my bill. Which we're still waiting for a response. But I think it's very, very important that they see the faces of the individuals who are going through this. And I say you could take and look at myself, a colleague of yours, who is serving with you in the same body, who understands these struggles, and whose family is going through this. A lot of people say, says, "No, we understand and we sympathize," and they give you the usual, you know, window dressing, and then they say, "But I can't do it, because it's an election year, and

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2 I'd get killed in my, in my district." Which I
3 think is, we are sent to represent the people and
4 we are there to do a job, and that job takes
5 courage. And I think we need to go out there and
6 continue to make sure that we elect people who
7 have that courage to stand up for what's right, to
8 be the voice of those that don't have a voice.
9 That is our job as legislators. And I think that
10 we will continue to have that fight. Our, our
11 Democrat, our Democratic colleagues in the
12 Assembly have been very receptive.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Okay. And
14 the other question I have is your Commission is a
15 great idea. That should exist with or without
16 Dream Act, it seems to me, because it's so
17 desperately needed anyway. Is this something that
18 exists elsewhere? I should know this, but it's
19 such a great idea in general, because no matter
20 whether you have funding or not for college, I
21 have to tell you, it never goes the whole way--

22 FRANCISCO MOYA: Right.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: --we all
24 know this as parents. And--

25 FRANCISCO MOYA: Right. So, so

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2 what happened in California was the Dream Fund
3 actually passed first.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Got it.

5 FRANCISCO MOYA: And they--

6 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Before the
7 Act.

8 FRANCISCO MOYA: Before the Act.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Okay.

10 FRANCISCO MOYA: :And in Illinois,
11 it's only a fund.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Okay.

13 FRANCISCO MOYA: What we did, is we
14 changed it and tailored it more to what, how it
15 would work here in, in New York, and really have
16 gotten together with the business community, to
17 come on board ahead of time.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Good for
19 them.

20 FRANCISCO MOYA: And yeah, it's
21 good for them, it's good for us, the technology,
22 there was a, the technology companies, there's a
23 great article from the Wall Street Journal that
24 came out last week, in which all of Silicon Valley
25 came together to say that they're going to put

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2 money together in California, to enact a, the
3 money to pay for the scholarships for undocumented
4 students. Now, here in the City, where we're
5 pushing this Silicon Valley as well, we need to be
6 making sure that those technology companies that
7 are coming in here will do the right thing, as
8 well. And make sure that we can really build
9 something great around this, so that all of these
10 students will have that access to scholarships,
11 which is so desperately needed. [time bell]

12 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Okay, thank
13 you very much.

14 [pause]

15 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: I'm sorry about
16 that. We have Council Member Jumaane Williams
17 from Brooklyn now. Mm-hmm.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIAMS: Thank you
19 very much, thank you Assemblyman. I just wanted
20 to add my voice to the importance of your bill,
21 and Assemblyman Linares' bill. Very, very
22 important, and I also, a lot of times it's our
23 brothers and sisters in the Latino community that
24 are in the forefront, but this affects all
25 immigrants. My family comes from Grenada, of

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2 Caribbean heritage. My district is made up of
3 probably 80-90 percent immigrants, primarily from
4 the Caribbean. So this affects us all, and as my
5 colleague was saying, there's really, there's only
6 nonsensical reasons why not to support this bill.
7 So, I'm happy that, it sounds like it may be
8 pushed forward. We have to provide every
9 opportunity that we can, particularly for our
10 students to get to the next level. So thank you
11 for the leadership you're showing. I did have one
12 question, and you were speaking with Fernando
13 Cabrera. I missed, I was, when you were
14 explaining the one year gap, can you just re-
15 explain that form e?

16 FRANCISCO MOYA: Sure. So what
17 we've seen in the testimonies that came, when we
18 did the hearing in, in the Assembly, and just
19 speaking to a lot of the Dreamers, some, some of
20 the students who were, who are here, they're here
21 and they were born in this country, they're,
22 they're citizens. Their parents unfortunately
23 don't have the documentation that they need. So
24 when they're applying to TAP, if they're not
25 claimed as an independent, if they're going into

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2 college before they turn 18, they'll be denied
3 that access because of the fact that they do not
4 have, their parents do not have the social
5 security number. They would have to wait till
6 they turn to be 18, claim to be an independent,
7 and then reapply the following year. And that's
8 where we've seen that this also comes in handy to
9 have a bill that would be able to provide them the
10 scholarship money that they need, to enter into
11 college.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIAMS: Thank
13 you.

14 FRANCISCO MOYA: Thank you.

15 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Okay, thank you
16 very much, Assemblyman Moya. That's it for the
17 questioning from the elected officials here today.
18 We thank you very much for coming in. And I look
19 forward to seeing you in the neighborhood.

20 FRANCISCO MOYA: Thank you, thank
21 you very much, Councilman Dromm, Your Excellency,
22 as I like to call you.

23 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Yes.

24 [laughter]

25 FRANCISCO MOYA: Thank you.

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2 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Your Eminence,
3 yes, Your Eminence. Thank you.

4 FRANCISCO MOYA: Thank you.

5 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: And Council
6 Member Rodriguez will call the, the panel.

7 CHAIRPERSON RODRIGUEZ: Yes,
8 Chairman. I'm going to be calling out a panel
9 with students, then we will hear from
10 representatives of the other elected officials
11 that also has introduced the, a, the bill related
12 to the Dream Act or the Dream Fund. Now, we're
13 calling on the panel of students, Giovanni Lopez;
14 Catherine Tavaris [phonetic]; Aline Herrera
15 [phonetic]; and Roxanne Way [phonetic]. There
16 any, all the student - - [background comments]

17 [pause, background noise]

18 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: We'll get you
19 another chair, so--[pause] Sergeant, do we have
20 another chair? [pause, background noise] And may
21 as well leave the chair there, too, because we're
22 going to do panels of four, Sergeant. Okay, thank
23 you.

24 CHAIRPERSON RODRIGUEZ: Please
25 identify yourself and before you speak.

1
2 CATHERINE TABARIS: Good morning,
3 my name is Catherine Tabaris [phonetic], I'm 16
4 years old, and I'm from Colombia. And I came
5 here, I came here two years ago. I make, I'm
6 active member of Make the Road New York, and I'm
7 also the President of my high school,
8 International High School at La Guardia Community
9 College. So should I keep on going with my
10 testimony? Okay. So, I came here around two
11 years ago, with the dream of having a better
12 education, so I came with my parents. Once they
13 came here, I get enrolled in, in my high school.
14 And well, I've been doing really good, my grades,
15 it's 3.9 average, on a scale of four. [cheers,
16 applause] And, thank you. And because my high
17 school has seen my responsibility and my
18 dedication to, to educate myself, they gave me the
19 opportunity to take college classes. So I'm
20 taking college classes at La Guardia Community
21 College. And my point average is 4.0 on a scale
22 of 4.0. So, I'm pretty dedicated to school, I
23 really love education, because I believe that
24 education is the most important thing that anybody
25 can take away from you. They can take your car

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2 away, they can take your apartment, but never
3 education. And so, I believe that now we are
4 undocumented, right, we're undocumented students.
5 But one day, we're going to be documented. But by
6 the day that, by the day that we're documented, we
7 need to be prepared. We need to be ready to
8 contribute to this country. That's what we want
9 to do. We want to have the opportunity, like we
10 want the government to give us the opportunity to
11 demonstrate that we're going to contribute a lot
12 to this country. So, my dream is to become an
13 environmental engineer. Since I was a little, a
14 little kid, I was always playing with nature, and
15 I was like, "When I grow up, I want to be an
16 engineer and I want to help nature and I want to
17 give back what I took from it." And so, that's my
18 dream, and in order to succeed, I need to go to
19 college, right? I need to make my career. I want
20 to go to City College, that's, that's my dream.
21 [laughs] Yeah, it's pretty good, and so in order
22 to go to City College I need to have the money to
23 go. It's expensive, and so I don't have the
24 money, and my mother, it's just my mother and me
25 'cause my father, he gave up and he went back to

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2 Colombia. So, it's just the two of us in this
3 country. And, sorry, and so like I see her every
4 day working so hard, to give me my food, to give
5 me shelter, just, you know, be a supportive
6 mother. I want to give back to her what she has
7 done for me, also. And I want to go to college, I
8 want to demonstrate her that she's in this effort
9 for a better future for all of us. And I mean,
10 education is the most important thing that every
11 human can have. And so I'm an undocumented
12 student, eager to succeed in life [time bell] and
13 thank you, thank you, guys.

14 [applause]

15 ROXANNE WAY: Good afternoon, City
16 Council Members. My name is Roxanne, and I'm here
17 on behalf of the New York State Leadership
18 Council, the organization which first approached
19 Senator Perkins and Assemblyman Linares, with the
20 New York Dream Act. I've been in this country
21 since I was twelve years old, I'm from Jamaica
22 originally. And I pretty much did well in school,
23 I graduated high school, 85 percent average,
24 international baccalaureate program, I earned two
25 college credits, while I was still in school. And

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2 ever since I graduated ten years ago, it's been
3 really difficult for me to pay for my education.
4 It's taken me ten years to get 30 credits. It's
5 just, it's too hard to go to school, pay for you--
6 like pay for your rent, pay for food, and go to
7 school. I'm a mom now, I have a little boy that
8 I'm really trying to work hard for, and I'm really
9 hoping that when this Dream Act pass I'll be able
10 to go to school, I'll be able to make a good life
11 for him. But so far, it's been difficult. I
12 haven't given up. It's been ten years, but I'm
13 not giving up, I'm still dreaming. I'm hoping to
14 become a teacher one day, and really help my
15 community in East New York, because I realize in
16 East New York there's just not enough focus on
17 education. And I want, I know that in, in a
18 State, in a country, you're only going to be as
19 strong as your weakest link. And in my community,
20 education is really a weak link and I'm really
21 looking for a way to address that. But it starts
22 with me first having my education. I don't think
23 that education should be, I don't think that
24 anything should bar you from higher education. I
25 don't think mon--your money should bar you from a

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2 higher education. Some people think that \$2,500
3 is, you know, a small change. For me, it might as
4 well be a million dollars. I've tried it, it's
5 like a million dollars, for me, \$2,500. But
6 really, I urge the City Council Members to
7 encourage the Governor to include this in his, in
8 his executive budget, include it. The money he'd
9 spend, you'd spend now, would be nothing compared
10 to what we can achieve when we finally graduate,
11 when we're able to contribute back to the State.
12 We'll be able to pay more taxes. Immigration is
13 going to change, like they have to do something.
14 But in the meantime, this bill could really help
15 us, you know, get a foot in, help me finish a now
16 ten year dream. That's pretty much taken up, this
17 thing has taken up my whole life, like I've always
18 wanted a education. My family are from eighth
19 grade, my grandma's level of education is eighth
20 grade. My aunt's, she's a nurse. It's my turn to
21 graduate. I'd be the first one in my family to
22 graduate from college, still, even at this point.
23 So, thank you for listening. [time bell]

24 [applause]

25 ALINE HERRERA: Good afternoon,

1 ladies and gentlemen of the Council. My name is
2 Aline Herrera, and it is an honor to stand here
3 today to express the importance of the New York
4 State Dream Act for undocumented immigrants like
5 myself. I was born in Mexico, yet I migrated to
6 the United States when I was only five months old.
7 I came with my mother and my sister and we
8 reunited here in New York with my father. Growing
9 up in The Bronx, I dreaming of become a teacher.
10 With a small blackboard and my hands covered in
11 chalk, I used to pretend to teach my teddy bears
12 the alphabet. However, when I was in high school,
13 I realized that my dreams were practically
14 unreachable due to my immigration status. I am
15 not eligible for financial aid, loans or
16 scholarships, and therefore my chances of going to
17 college were slim. This is not my story alone,
18 but rather the story of many young people who,
19 regardless of their outstanding grades, are unable
20 to access higher education due to their
21 immigration status. These are aspiring engineers,
22 lawyers, doctors, architects, whose dreams they
23 must painfully surrender. Considering New York
24 State's rich history of immigration, from the
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2 first Dutch settlers, to the newcomers on Ellis
3 Island, this State should not fail to recognize
4 the potential of its migrant population. This
5 State should not permit this injustice, but rather
6 it should acknowledge and embrace the talents of
7 all individuals. With private scholarships and
8 the help of my parents, I was able to attend the
9 City College of New York, yet I am currently not
10 enrolled for I was unable to afford the increased
11 tuition. Nevertheless, I believe that soon I will
12 stop dreaming about the Dream Act and I will soon
13 experience the Dream Act. My dream is to complete
14 my education and become a bilingual elementary
15 school teacher. I want to make a difference in
16 those crowded bilingual classrooms in the South
17 Bronx, and help every child learn. Overall, by
18 providing the financial resources necessary,
19 undocumented students in New York will be, will be
20 one step closer to achieving their American Dream.
21 Please pass the New York Dream Act and help us get
22 back to the State we call home. Pass the New York
23 Dream Act and help us achieve our Dreams. Thank
24 you very much.

25 [applause]

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2 GIOVANNI LOPEZ: Hello, my name's
3 Giovanni and I am undocumented. I am also a
4 member of the New York State Youth Council. I was
5 born in Ecuador and came to the United States when
6 I was five years old. Like any immigrant, I
7 struggled to learn the language and the culture.
8 But as you can tell, I've mastered the English
9 language. [laughter] I soon began to excel in my
10 classes and was awarded the Presidential Award
11 twice before going into high school.
12 Unfortunately, when I was 16, I arrived one
13 morning to a house surrounded by ICE. My mom was
14 being deported, and at that moment I could do
15 nothing to stop them. That was the last time I
16 saw my mom. My little sister, only six years old
17 at the moment, soon followed, and moved to Ecuador
18 with my mom. I made the difficult decision to
19 stay in the country alone, to continue my
20 education and to send money to my family, so my
21 sister could continue studying in Ecuador. My
22 mom's \$8 a day job was barely enough to pay for
23 their essentials, not to mention my sister's
24 school. So, I worked many long hours trying to
25 keep up with my bills and responsibilities while

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2 somehow maintaining my grades above average.
3 Senior year came and went faster than I could
4 admit, and I graduated top five percent of my
5 class. College was my next step, and my dream to
6 be a doctor held firm in my mind. Without
7 financial aid, though, Suffolk Community College
8 became my one and only choice to continue school.
9 The workload was bearable but paying two-and-a-
10 half grand a semester was most painful. My
11 family's wellbeing and my education was my main
12 priority, which at times would lead me to go
13 hungry. One day, my hunger led me to ShopRite,
14 and with the intent of stealing food, to quench
15 the hunger in my stomach. I was arrested that
16 day, and fear just overwhelmed me, I thought I was
17 going to get deported. And all my dreams would
18 crash and me and my sister would not be able to
19 pay for school in our country. Luckily, the judge
20 took pity on me and cleared my charges, but I have
21 friends that were undocumented with the same
22 situation, and not have the money to go to
23 college. They went to drugs, they went to crime,
24 and some got deported because of it. I'm just
25 asking the Dream Act get passed so people like me,

1
2 people have hope that they can continue going to
3 school, that they have something to lead them the
4 right path. Dream Act is really important for
5 everyone. Thank you. Thank you very much.

6 [applause]

7 CHAIRPERSON RODRIGUEZ: [off mic] -
8 - we can say to you, thank you.

9 [applause]

10 GIOVANNI LOPEZ: Thank you.

11 CHAIRPERSON RODRIGUEZ: [off mic]
12 You will graduate--[on mic] You will graduate from
13 college. You are a role model, to everyone. To
14 the human being, to black, Latino, Asian, people
15 with green card, people born here, because what
16 you represent is a value, social justice. It's
17 the need to continue making progress in this
18 society. But we have make a lot of important
19 progress. But still we have a lot of challenges
20 in front of us. So, I don't think that, I
21 appreciate everyone that shows solidarity. But
22 you have to be in their shoe. You have to be
23 there. It's like not only as undocumented, but
24 also being as, as someone that face so many
25 obstacle. And that's where we still have to close

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2 the gap. We have to close the gap. And we can do
3 it. And I think that we have made, when we look
4 at a lot of struggle, we are making important
5 advancement, by your story, as you say, is a story
6 of a lot of people. I say in the press
7 conference, one--I was saying for 14 years,
8 teaching in the classroom at Luperon High School,
9 we create a school that was basically for new
10 coming student for Latin America. We saw the - -
11 student not being able to continue the education
12 because they immigrant status. However, we have
13 the Jacqueline Cinto [phonetic] who wants to join
14 the movement, who moved to Washington, D.C., or
15 people like you, the whole group of you, no one
16 way or stop, for you to achieve your degree. You
17 will go to City College, you have to go to city
18 College. And you know what? We should not wait
19 for the Dream Act. We should work together, and
20 we will meet with you, and we should be sure that
21 we give the resources, that we work with CUNY, to
22 be sure with the GPA that you have, there should
23 not be any obstacle for you to be part of the - -
24 engineer program that we have at City University.
25 So, you had a commitment that we going to be

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2 meeting with you, for and all the young people, to
3 work together, not only to pass the Dream Act, but
4 also to be supporter for you to be that teacher,
5 that engineer, that architect, that economist, who
6 has, who are the future of the City. But if you
7 will have a skill and you're a - - and Cuomo in
8 front of you, what will you say to them in one
9 minute? To convince them that they should include
10 the Dream Act in this budget negotiation?

11 ROXANNE WAY: Please, Governor, I
12 have a baby to take care of, and a life to create
13 for him that doesn't include a life of violent
14 crime, which is pretty much the life that I have
15 in East New York right now. It's really horrible.
16 And I really just want to change my life, change
17 my son's life, so we can move on, live the
18 American Dream.

19 ALINE HERRERA: It's not about just
20 investing money but investing in the intellectual
21 capital of the people. We people, we can
22 contribute, we are young people, we are going to
23 contribute a lot to this country if we have the
24 opportunity. That the government, of the
25 government giving us support. So, please, please

1
2 help us, and please pass Dream Act, on the Dream
3 Fund.

4 CATHERINE TABARIS: I would say,
5 the fact that New York has already invested in our
6 education from pre-K to high school, it has been a
7 great investment, but we cannot stop at 12th
8 grade. The investment has to continue because we
9 will give back to the state that we call home,
10 that we love and know as our own.

11 GIOVANNI LOPEZ: Even though we, as
12 immigrants, came here long time ago, we are
13 American. We have embraced the American culture,
14 we have learned the language. We are American.
15 And thus, just like any American, we have the
16 right to study, we have the right to education, we
17 have a right to our dreams. And the Dream Act has
18 to become a reality.

19 [applause]

20 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: I just want to,
21 I just want to say thank you very much to all of
22 you. We do have a couple of other Council Members
23 who want to ask a few questions, too. But your
24 stories are so compelling, and so much of what
25 America needs to hear, because your stories are so

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2 much about what America is really about. And I
3 think we need to make sure that that connection is
4 made with people who would oppose us otherwise, to
5 know what you've gone through, and to--I was a
6 teacher for 25 years, and I think heard two or
7 three of you say you wanted to be teachers, as
8 well. Sometimes I wonder why, but [laughter] Good
9 for you, and you got to live that dream. You
10 know, and we need people like you to come into our
11 schools and to work with our youth, because of the
12 experiences you had, and have had, so that you can
13 share because so many of them are young, young
14 children who are also going through the same
15 things that you've been, that you've gone through.
16 So, I just want to say thank you for your
17 testimony. And I'm just going to turn it over now
18 to Council Member Williams for some questions.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIAMS: Thank you
20 very much. Thank you for sharing your story. And
21 Giovanni in particular, thank you so much for
22 that. I, I just learned a few years ago, and I
23 can say it now, he's told me, because everything
24 is fine. But my brother was undocumented.
25 Couldn't go to his mother's funeral because of

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2 that, which was very trying for me, and we've
3 managed to work it out. But it's really close to
4 home, and I know my brother, he's 50-something
5 now, basically all my life, and had no idea about
6 the issues that he was having. So, a lot of
7 people that we know, have these issues, whether or
8 not they speak up. Ms. Way, I wanted to thank you
9 for your story, as well. But I want to use my
10 minutes reading some of your testimony that you
11 did not, were not able to read, because I think
12 it's important. And you also had a 1300 on the
13 SATs, which I think is great, I'm assuming it's
14 when it was a 1600. And I see that you went to
15 Howard and were unable to pay. And then you had
16 to pay to get your transcripts released, which
17 seemed to be very difficult. But just a couple of
18 points that struck me that if I can just read it.
19 "When a woman finds out she's pregnant, she's
20 usually filled with joy; instead, I felt
21 trepidations knowing the life I could condemn my
22 child to by not having the necessary documents it
23 would take to help me finish school, obtain a good
24 job and be able to provide my baby with the kind
25 of support he deserves. We struggle daily to

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2 survive, we have to pay rent, which is impossibly
3 high, making it hard to put enough food on the
4 table. There are times when our electricity have
5 been turned off, there are times when we are not
6 able to pay the whole rent, so we live with the
7 fear of eviction. It is a constant threat. There
8 are times when I cannot afford to buy Jonah," your
9 son, "a new pair of sneakers after he has outgrown
10 the last pair." And then jump down to, "I work
11 hard for my family, and I will continue to do so.
12 I know that there I a better way. I know that I
13 can achieve more with a degree in hand than I will
14 ever working for 50 hours a week as a nanny. I am
15 undocumented through no fault of my own, I'm
16 undocumented but I strongly believe no piece of
17 paper should stand between a person and their
18 education. In Eastern Brooklyn, many of my peers
19 are not even interested in earning a high school
20 diploma, much less a college degree, but that has
21 not stopped me from dreaming of graduating from
22 college." I wanted to make sure I read that into
23 record, because it's very, very important. Thank
24 you for sharing that with us and you guys have
25 undauntingly continuing toward that dream, I hope

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2 you do that, and I hope we can do what we can to
3 make sure you achieve that. Thank you.

4 [applause]

5 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you,
6 Council Member Williams. Council Member Brewer.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Thank you
8 very much, you were beyond impressive, everybody.
9 My question is when you go to CUNY and say that
10 you don't have enough funding for the tuition,
11 when, as you did, 'cause we understood that when
12 the tuition went up, that CUNY was going to help
13 those students who were caught in the middle. And
14 so I'm just wondering were you able to do that?
15 Or maybe you weren't able to even ask, or they
16 didn't respond. I'm just curious.

17 ROXANNE WAY: From what I
18 understand, CUNY was in fact supposed to provide
19 somehow for those students. And I think most of
20 the help came from loans and there was a lot of,
21 from what I remember, they were promoting a lot of
22 loans and there's another program at my square, I
23 forgot the name of it right now. But the
24 President of my, of my college mentioned that she
25 is working towards promoting the, the New York

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2 Dream Act, but that's all I really was able to
3 grasp and apply it to my life, just having a
4 little bit of hope, acknowledging that the
5 President of my college is also promoting the New
6 York Dream Act.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Okay, so
8 it's mostly loans and not grants, that's why--

9 ROXANNE WAY: Right, right, and
10 considering that I'm not eligible for any loans--

11 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Right.

12 ROXANNE WAY: --or anything of that
13 nature, then that - -

14 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: 'Cause that
15 was not the impression that we had at hearings
16 here with the Council, just FYI. And my second
17 question for you. Are you in college now? So
18 what are you doing?

19 GIOVANNI LOPEZ: I just recently
20 graduated community college. It took me about
21 four years, because of--

22 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Okay.

23 GIOVANNI LOPEZ: --lack of money.
24 But the next step, I do want to go into a medical
25 based school, but of course those are usually more

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expensive, and--

COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Okay. And now my following question is, do all of you know about Options? You know what Options is? 'Cause at Goddard Riverside Neighborhood Center, it's online, you can go to that particular Center. It is in my district on the Upper West Side. It tells you every college and every loan and every grant and every scholarship. And it takes about five minutes, as opposed to looking yourself. So I'm just saying, it's something to look for.

GIOVANNI LOPEZ: Unfortunately, there are like scholarships that aren't government based, but a lot of them require community service. And with lack of time from increased work, there's very little--

COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Okay, but my guess is the four of you, if you keep in touch with us, it would be helpful.

GIOVANNI LOPEZ: Yes.

COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Thank you.

GIOVANNI LOPEZ: Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON RODRIGUEZ: I just want to say, the only scholarship that we have that was

1
2 offered, regarding the immigrant status, was the
3 Peter Vallone Scholarship. As far as we know,
4 you've been, and I've been sitting, I've been
5 sitting in - - scholarship, and other scholarship,
6 when I was working with the student in my school,
7 and I know that most of those scholarship has a
8 requirement of green card. So, [background
9 comment] That's, that's the information that I
10 have got from--So, if we can get any other
11 information. And that's what we said, the only
12 one that did not require any immigrant status was
13 the Peter Vallone Scholarship, but we will find
14 out from CUNY if there's anything else. But as
15 far as we know, there's not any other scholarship
16 there [time bell] that does not require a
17 immigrant status.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: I'm just
19 saying for the four of you, for testifying today,
20 keep in touch, we can figure it out.

21 GIOVANNI LOPEZ: Thank you.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: I can
23 figure it out. Thank you. [laughter]

24 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: And just to be
25 clear on the Vallone Scholarships, the Mayor cut

1
2 that from the budget last year, and unfortunately
3 the Council was not able to restore it. So, that
4 is another issue that we have to look at moving
5 forward. So, I don't think there's any other
6 questions from anybody. So, with that, I want to
7 thank the panel for coming in. [applause] And
8 we'll call the next group up. And that would be
9 Cordell Cleare, I'm sorry if I'm not saying the
10 name correctly, from Senator Bill Perkins' office;
11 Rocio Cruz, from Assembly Member Guillermo
12 Linares' office; Carina Bergal [phonetic], from
13 Manhattan Borough President Scott Stringer's
14 office; and Suman Raghunathan, from the
15 Progressive States Network. [pause, background
16 noise] Yeah, we do have her testimony. [pause,
17 background noise]

18 CORDELL CLEARE: Good afternoon,
19 everyone, I'm Cordell Cleare, and I'm going to
20 just read some brief remarks from State Senator
21 Bill Perkins. But first I would like to thank
22 Chairman Dromm and Chairman Rodriguez for holding
23 this very important hearing of the City Council
24 for this very, very important legislation. On
25 behalf of Senator Perkins, who represents the

1
2 Upper West Side, East Harlem, Central Harlem,
3 Washington Heights, and we cover, we have the
4 pleasure of serving a very, very diverse district.
5 We have a large Mexican population, a large
6 Dominican population, a large West African
7 population. We have some Irish immigrant
8 population, we have some Italian immigrant
9 population. So, we just feel very fortunate to
10 have all of that in our community. And we first
11 and foremost want to thank the New York State
12 Youth Leadership Council for bringing this issue
13 to us, for coming out of the shadows, unapologetic
14 and unafraid. [applause] [pause] Okay, this
15 bill is long overdue and it is the right thing to
16 do. It is unjust, unfair, and un-American, to
17 collect well over half a billion dollars in tax
18 revenue from undocumented immigrants, only to deny
19 them financial support for higher education that
20 is granted to other New Yorkers. The benefits of
21 the Dream Act far outweigh the costs. The Fiscal
22 Policy Institute estimates that the cost would be
23 less than two percent of TAP; furthermore, the
24 Board of Regents estimates that the TAP, that the
25 cost would be less than one percent of TAP. Both

1
2 estimates amount to about a million dollars, or
3 one-six hundred and sixty second (1/662) of what
4 undocumented immigrants pay in taxes. Allowing
5 this injustice and these exclusionary tactics to
6 continue violates the very principles on which
7 this nation was founded. We need your help today
8 to urge Governor Cuomo, Assembly Member Sheldon
9 Silver, Speaker and Senate Majority Leader Dean
10 Skelos to move forward on this critically needed
11 piece of legislation that will ensure equal access
12 to higher education for all young people,
13 regardless of their immigration status. The New
14 York Times called passing the Dream Act not only a
15 decent thing to do, but also a good investment,
16 noting that students with college degrees make a
17 state more attractive to businesses, earn more and
18 pay more in taxes. The Dream Act would open up
19 the State's Tuition Assistance Program, TAP, to
20 New York's undocumented students. These are our
21 children, we cannot afford to allow their talent
22 to go untapped. They should have an opportunity
23 to further their education and give back to our
24 communities. There is no good reason not to pass
25 this legislation, and the time is now. Thank you.

1
2 ROCIO CRUZ: Good afternoon. First
3 I would like to thank Council Member Ydanis
4 Rodriguez, Chairman of the Higher Education
5 Committee, and Council Member Dromm, Chairman of
6 the Immigration Committee, not only for holding
7 this hearing, but also for take a stand on behalf
8 of immigrant communities, and all these
9 undocumented students, who should have a right
10 access to higher education. And I'm going to read
11 a statement on behalf of Assembly Member Guillermo
12 Linares. "As the primary sponsor of the New York
13 Dream Act, and as an immigrant who had the
14 opportunity to obtain an education in the United
15 States, I urge for the passage of this important
16 legislation. With the federal Dream Act's
17 legislation stalled, New York must take a stand
18 like California, Texas, Illinois and Mexico did,
19 who have shown leadership by passing legislation
20 to provide financial aid to undocumented students.
21 Each year, thousands of undocumented students
22 nationwide graduate from high school, with no hope
23 of pursuing their dreams because they are
24 ineligible for financial aid. The New York Dream
25 Act, A6829-B will support the station [phonetic]

1
2 of state's Tuition Assistance Program, TAP, to all
3 students, regardless of the immigration status,
4 opening the doors to a brighter future for these
5 students. The days ahead are critical as we
6 negotiate this year budget. According to a cost
7 benefit analysis conducted by the Fiscal Policy
8 Institute, extending TAP to include ineligible,
9 undocumented students, will represent a minimal
10 increase of two percent to current TAP aid. Only
11 two percent increase will allow this state to
12 respond to the needs of these undocumented
13 students. I believe that a two percent investment
14 shouldn't be such a hard investment to do in
15 education. Investing in the dreams of these
16 immigrant youth is not only the moral thing to do,
17 it's also social and economic imperative. It is
18 common knowledge that higher education provides a
19 very strong return on investment. The median area
20 income of a New York State worker with a
21 bachelor's degree, is \$25,000 higher per year than
22 with just a high school degree. The more highly
23 educated a state - - is, the more attractive that
24 state is a place to locate business. I can't
25 think of a better investment to New York State

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2 than allowing undocumented youth access to higher
3 education. As I said before, at two percent
4 should not be such a difficult investment. The
5 New York Dream Act has the full support of the New
6 York City Mayor Michael Bloomberg, City Council
7 Speaker Christine Quinn, U.S. State Senator
8 Kirsten Gillibrand, our State Education system,
9 the Regents, State Education Department, CUNY,
10 SUNY, teachers and labor unions, not to mention -
11 - support from business, interfaith and civil
12 right communities. As a beacon of hope and
13 opportunity for immigrants community, New York
14 must show the nation that equal access to higher
15 education for all individuals is not only the core
16 to our values, but is essential to our economic
17 progress. Furthermore, New York State has a long
18 history of advocating and protecting the rights of
19 immigrants. This legacy should not be compromised
20 now. I respectfully - - government and the
21 leadership in the Assembly and the Senate to pass
22 the New York Dream Act and the Dream Fund [time
23 bell] and take a stand on behalf of immigrant
24 communities." And I just want to say that we're
25 not asking for much, we're just asking to have

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2 access to higher education, and we have wait long
3 enough ,and I think we should take a stand. And I
4 hope that this year we're going to stop dreaming,
5 'cause it's not going to be a dream anymore, it's
6 going to be a reality. Thank you.

7 [applause]

8 CARINA BERGAL: Thank you for the
9 opportunity to testify. I commend the
10 Chairpersons, Council Members Dromm and Rodriguez,
11 for holding this hearing on the New York Dream Act
12 and New York Dream Fund. I'll be testifying on
13 behalf of Manhattan Borough President Scott M.
14 Stringer. "As the President of the Borough of
15 Manhattan, I proudly represent the historical
16 entryway for generations of immigrants in the U.S.
17 and over half a million immigrants who constitute
18 30 percent of borough's residents. Our City and
19 country continue to flourish because of the
20 positive contributions of immigrants to our
21 economic, cultural, social and civic life. It has
22 been a priority of my office to ensure the full
23 and equal participation of immigrant communities
24 in our City. And in 2006, I convened the
25 Manhattan Borough President's Immigrant Rights

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2 Taskforce. Through this initiative, we identified
3 that there was a lack of resources and support for
4 immigrant communities to enable them to access
5 services and benefits and enforce their legal
6 rights. In response, last year my office launched
7 the Manhattan Borough President's Immigrant Rights
8 and Services Manual, a unique and comprehensive
9 tool that explains legal rights, public benefits,
10 eligibility and public programs and services in a
11 wide range of areas, in a straightforward and
12 comprehensible format. The problems we see
13 immigrants face in our City are only a microcosm
14 of the greater story of a broken national
15 immigration system. Each year, approximately
16 75,000 hardworking immigrant students graduate
17 from high school across the country, but too many
18 of them are unable to access post-secondary
19 education, obtain federal financial assistance, or
20 secure work because of their status. In 2007, my
21 office launched the Civil Leaders of Tomorrow
22 Fellowship, to promote the goals of the Federal
23 Dream Act, by providing a new source of support
24 for immigrant youth in higher education, and
25 placing students in internships with immigrant

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2 rights organizations. In order to move our City
3 and country forward in a global society, we must
4 provide youth like the civil leaders fellows, the
5 chance to realize their full potential as
6 Americans, so that they may lead productive lives
7 as contributing members of our nation. We urge
8 the City Council to pass the resolution in support
9 of New York State Dream legislation that would
10 provide opportunity and fairness to thousands of
11 immigrant youth in our City by increasing access
12 to financial aid the ability to succeed for the
13 children of immigrants. Passage of the New York
14 Dream Act and New York Dream Fund legislation
15 would benefit many thousands of students in New
16 York City alone, including at least an estimated
17 10,000 City University of New York students. For
18 qualifying, hardworking immigrant youth, this
19 legislation would provide aid for higher
20 education. Passing New York Dream legislation is
21 a step toward bringing these young people fully
22 into the formal economy, which will in turn grow
23 our skilled workforce and increase tax revenues.
24 It will also deter them from the risk of dropping
25 out of school or engaging in criminal activity.

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2 In many cases, these immigrant youth know of no
3 out of school or engaging in criminal activity.
4 In many cases, these immigrant youth have invested
5 the same hard work and faith in our society as
6 other Americans. And we must provide them with
7 the chance to further their lives. The New York
8 Dream Act and Dream Fund legislation is an
9 important step toward finding a serious solution
10 to our immigration system, and integrating our
11 society, restoring the legitimacy to our laws, and
12 treating immigrants with dignity. We must make
13 the most of this critical opportunity and pass the
14 New York Dream Act and Dream Fund legislation as
15 we continue to pursue comprehensive immigration
16 reform. Thank you for your attention to this
17 matter.

18 [applause]

19 SUMAN RAGHUNATHAN: Members of the
20 City Council, Chairs Dromm and Rodriguez, thank
21 you for the opportunity to testify in support of
22 the New York State Dream Act and the Dream Act
23 Fund Commission. I'm the Policy Director of a
24 national organization that works with progressive
25 state legislators to advance a host of critical,

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2 progressive policies, and as a national
3 organization that is actively working in dozens of
4 states with nearly 100 progressive state
5 legislators, to expand opportunity for all
6 residents, both immigrant and native born,
7 Progressive States Network strongly encourages the
8 passage of the New York State Dream Act, so New
9 York can remain a beacon of enlightened state
10 policies, with respect to immigration across the
11 country, at a time when a college education is
12 truly the gateway to weathering a still sluggish
13 economy, even as the cost of higher education
14 continues to skyrocket, the potential for these
15 bills to bolster New York State's economic future
16 and ability to attract and keep high technology
17 and innovation industries in the short and long
18 term is unmistakable. And in an increasingly
19 globally competitive world, a highly educated
20 population is the surest route to broad posterity,
21 prosperity, excuse me. New York State has managed
22 to weather the Great Recession in great part due
23 to its large number of college educated residents
24 who have helped the State remain a Mecca for high
25 growth industries. College educated workers, as

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2 many have said, earn more over the course of their
3 lifetime, add more revenue to states and
4 localities, and contribute significantly to our
5 State's and nation's civic life. And in fact,
6 according to one crucial study, the U.S. workforce
7 will face a shortage of 16 million college
8 educated adults by 2025. Addressing this gap is a
9 challenge of the highest order for New York and
10 the nation's future productivity, as well as
11 workforce development horizons. One the proposal
12 such as the New York State Dream Act can help
13 address by dramatically expanding the
14 affordability of higher education. The Dream Act
15 and the Dream Act Fund Commissioner provide an
16 intelligent, targeted way to meet that challenge
17 while also responding to the growing demand for a
18 college educated workforce outlined by many
19 innovative companies and industries. And New York
20 State's continued ability to attract the companies
21 of the future hinges upon expanding the State's
22 pool of talented, college educated students, to
23 serve as a workforce for such firms, as we
24 anticipate and work toward federal reform and
25 legal status for undocumented students. Allowing

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2 these students access to State funded financial
3 aid and private scholarships not only allows such
4 students to expand their contributions to New York
5 State, but it will help New York retain its edge
6 as a magnet for the global marketplace and the
7 college educated talent it depends upon. Doing so
8 will allow New York State to remain in the
9 vanguard of progressive state immigration policy,
10 as we continue together to pave the way toward
11 passing federal, the federal Dream Act." Thank
12 you.

13 [applause]

14 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Okay, thank you
15 all very much, as well. I understand that Council
16 Member Rose has some questions.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSE: Good
18 afternoon. You know, I, I really didn't want to
19 sit here and be the only Council Member that
20 didn't, you know, express my outrage, that, you
21 know, an investment that is so minimal with a
22 return that's so optimal, is, you know, being
23 overlooked. When I worked with the New York State
24 Department of Higher Education, one of the terms
25 that they used, and they were very concerned about

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2 was, New York State's brain drain. That is was a
3 shame that the young people who were educated
4 chose not to stay in the State. And here we have,
5 we have a whole--for the lack of a really good
6 word, but a whole crop [laughs] that's not a good
7 word, guys [laughter] but we have, here we have
8 resources that we could really support, and, and
9 give, you know, and make a real investment in our
10 intellectual capital. So, I was wondering, what,
11 what, how closely is the Department of Higher
12 Education working with the elected officials, and
13 if in fact, you know, some sort of advocacy on
14 their, you know, part? Because they were at that
15 time looking to develop pilot programs, and
16 grants, to, to increase the intellectual capital
17 in New York State. So, is the Department of
18 Higher Ed working with the elected officials and
19 is there something that maybe they could do that
20 would, you know, help push?

21 ROCIO CRUZ: Well, - - the Board of
22 Regents introduced similar legislation in the
23 Assembly and also SUNY endorsed the legis--the
24 Dream Act, and the Dream Fund, and they are
25 pushing for it. But we need to get as many people

1
2 as possible behind this, and we just are, right
3 now we just urge the Governor and the Assembly
4 leadership to make it part of the budget. 'Cause
5 one of the arguments there's not enough money, but
6 when you think about two percent of current TAP,
7 are you really talking that this is, there is not
8 enough money in this State budget to allow these
9 students to receive an education. So, that's what
10 we're urging right now. We have, we have a
11 timeline that we have to take advantage of, and
12 that's the only thing we are asking for. All the
13 advocates and everybody that can get behind this
14 movement to help us push for these to be included
15 in this year's budget.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSE: And I just
17 want to thank my colleagues, you know, for their
18 support of Reso 803 and 1219. And that, you know,
19 we can't afford to let this legislation not be
20 voted on. And I know that we will support. Thank
21 you.

22 PANEL: Thank you.

23 [time bell] [applause]

24 CHAIRPERSON RODRIGUEZ: Thank you.

25 Now we're calling the next panel: Michael Mandell

1
2 [phonetic]; Jessica Oroso [phonetic]; Camille
3 Mackler; Kevin Cho [phonetic]; and Barney Li
4 [phonetic].

5 [pause, background noise]

6 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: While that
7 panels up, I want to acknowledge that we've
8 received testimony from Chancellor Goldstein from
9 CUNY, as well, in support of both pieces of
10 legislation. [pause, background noise] Bethany
11 Lie [phonetic]? Le [phonetic]? I'm sorry. Meung
12 Kevin Choi [phonetic]? Camille Mackler, Jessica
13 Orozco. And Michael Mandel. [pause, background
14 noise] Okay, if you'd like to start over here,
15 that would be fine, while we're getting the other
16 people from the other room, thank you.

17 JESSICA OROZCO: Good afternoon, my
18 name is Jessica Orozco, and I'm the Director of
19 Immigration and Civic Engagement, speaking on
20 behalf of the Hispanic Federation. I would first
21 like to thank Council Member Dromm and Rodriguez
22 for bringing us together today, and affording our
23 community of immigrant and Latino advocates the
24 opportunity to express our need for the Dream Act
25 and Dream Fund. I'd like to start off by saying

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2 that the Hispanic Federation unequivocally
3 supports the proposed Dream bills and as a leader
4 in the Latino community, calls on the New York
5 State Legislature to pass the Dream Act and Dream
6 Fund to ensure that Dream students have fair and
7 equal access to higher education. For more than
8 ten years now, the federation has been working on
9 advocating for the passage of humane and fair
10 immigration reform in our nation's capital.
11 Regrettably, Congress has continually failed to
12 fix our broken immigration system and pass common
13 sense reform. The lack of leadership in
14 Washington has pushed states to fill the void and
15 answer this fundamental question: How do we view
16 and treat immigrants in our society. Several
17 states like Arizona and Alabama have chosen to
18 pass laws that punish and marginalize undocumented
19 immigrants, at any and all costs. In these
20 states, the goal has been to advocate racial
21 segregation, family disintegration, and remove as
22 many immigrants from local communities as
23 possible. New York, a beacon of hope and
24 opportunity for generations of immigrants much
25 show the nation a different way. Indeed, the

1
2 Empire State must forge a path that honors its
3 history and the contributions immigrants have made
4 to its economy, culture and quality of life.
5 Where others choose intolerance, we can choose to
6 stand for integration, education and opportunity.
7 The proposed Dream bills offer Governor Cuomo the
8 chance to demonstrate this population's value to
9 the rest of New York's economic, cultural and
10 social wellbeing. New York's undocumented
11 immigrants represent a wealth of untapped
12 potential and talent that under current policy
13 threatens to be wasted. Most notably, our
14 undocumented youth seeking an education that would
15 allow them to become the State's next leading
16 doctors, lawyers and community leaders, are not
17 only deserving of our support but eager to prove
18 and contribute to their value, their value to the
19 state they call home. These students that would
20 benefit from these bills have been trained to
21 strive towards the goal of higher education by our
22 culture, public school system and the American
23 Dream. But many would find themselves unable to
24 simply, to simply because of the high cost, if
25 past Dream bills would help lift barriers to

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2 college for thousands of undocumented students, by
3 extending New York State's tuition assistance
4 program to all students who qualify for aid
5 regardless of the immigration status, the State
6 would be investing in its undocumented youth at a
7 relatively low cost, with a strong return on
8 investment. In other words, a lifetime's worth of
9 social, cultural, political and economic
10 contributions, that can be cultivated and
11 celebrated rather than hidden out of fear. Let's
12 give dreamers the opportunity that other
13 generations have been granted, to work hard,
14 achieve and fully contribute to [time bell] our
15 society. In doing so, we will be answering
16 affirmatively how we view immigrants as integral
17 to New York's future success.

18 [applause]

19 MICHAEL MANDEL: Good afternoon, my
20 name is Michael Mandel, I'm an immigration lawyer,
21 and Co-Chair of the Advocacy Committee of the New
22 York Chapter of the American Immigration Lawyers
23 Association, the nation's largest organization for
24 immigration lawyers. Based on my professional
25 experiences over the past ten years, I am well

1
2 aware that there are many difficult, controversial
3 issues when it comes to immigration; yet what to
4 do about undocumented young people should not be
5 one of them. The fact that Congress has not
6 passed the federal Dream Act is disgraceful,
7 unacceptable and probably the single best example
8 of Congressional dysfunction when it comes to
9 immigration. Unfortunately, the State of New York
10 cannot grant legal immigration status to Dreamers,
11 I wish we could. But short of that, making
12 college more accessible through passage of the New
13 York State Dream Act is a worthy alternative.
14 AILA-New York supports the New York Dream Act for
15 several reasons. First, it was imagined by
16 undocumented young people themselves, specifically
17 the brave and outrageously talented leaders of the
18 New York State Youth Leadership Council. I've had
19 the privilege of working with some of them through
20 their "Education Not Deportation" program, where
21 they fight to prevent Dreamers from being
22 deported. They're tenacity, creativity,
23 compassion and sense of justice is beyond
24 impressive. Every day, they exhibit the courage
25 and moral leadership so lacking in D.C. and

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2 elsewhere, succeeding in spite of overwhelming
3 odds and in the face of a heartless and cruel
4 system. They are tomorrow's lawyers, teachers,
5 scientists and doctors, but not without a college
6 degree. Second, leveling the educational playing
7 field by passing the New York Dream Act is a moral
8 issue. After all, why should undocumented young
9 people be treated differently than their U.S.
10 citizen peers, when they really are the same in
11 every way except for where they were born. While
12 having the right to pay in-state tuition to attend
13 college is a good start, it is clearly not enough,
14 considering the vast number of Dreamers in New
15 York still unable to afford higher education. And
16 while any legislation that makes attending college
17 more affordable is worthy of consideration, we
18 feel strongly that Dreamers should be eligible for
19 full access to financial aid through New York's
20 Tuition Assistance Program. For people who are
21 unmoved by moral arguments, it's important to note
22 that there are practical reasons, as well.
23 Everyone benefits from a highly educated
24 workforce. Dreamers are drawn to professions with
25 severe shortages of workers, like nursing, and

1
2 they possess the discipline, determination and
3 creativity needed to become successful small
4 business owners, the backbone of the economy.

5 I've heard the arguments in opposition to the
6 Dream Act, but they don't hold up to scrutiny.

7 The cost is an insignificant amount when
8 considering the return on investment. Some people
9 are concerned about rewarding what they call "bad
10 behavior," but this ignores the fact that Dreamers
11 were brought here at a young age by their
12 families, have done their best to play by an
13 unfair set of rules, have gone to school and
14 contributed to their communities in countless
15 ways. Dreamers are our future and the quicker
16 that those in power realize it, and take action to
17 allow them to pursue their educational and
18 professional dreams, the better off we all will
19 be. Thank you. [time bell]

20 [applause]

21 CAMILLE MACKLER: Hi, my name is
22 Camille Mackler, I'm an immigration attorney in
23 private practice in New York; also, a member of
24 the American Immigration Lawyers Association, and
25 on the New York Chapter's Media and Advocacy

1
2 Committee. My practice focuses primarily on
3 family based immigration law, defensive removal
4 and asylum, so I have had a lot of contact with
5 Dreamers or potential Dreamers and their families
6 over the years. I'd like to start by telling you
7 this story of Jordan Avira [phonetic], Jordan is
8 currently sitting at Delaney Hall. She was
9 brought to the United States by her mother when
10 she was twelve from Argentina. She went to high
11 school until she was forced to drop out to get a
12 job, to support her family. She still managed to
13 get a GED. And is, was working and hoping to
14 attend college when she was arrested by
15 immigration customs enforcement, as they were
16 looking for her brother who had a criminal
17 background and who had an outstanding deportation
18 order against him. When she was first detained by
19 ICE, they tried to put her on a plane, she
20 respectfully refused. She's now been at Delaney
21 Hall for eight months. She was first transferred
22 to a County Jail, Hudson County Jail as a
23 punishment for her refusal to be deported. She
24 kept fighting to stay in this country because it's
25 the only country that she's ever called home.

1
2 When I met with her last week at Delaney Hall, she
3 looked at me and she started crying and she told
4 me, "I don't want to be here anymore, please just
5 send me home." And when I asked her what changed,
6 she told me she was just so disappointed in this
7 country. There is no doubt, as we've heard over
8 and over again today, that the Dream Act makes
9 economic sense for New York and for our country.
10 It would bring in increased revenue, it would
11 provide a more attractive workforce for New York
12 State, for businesses to come here, and to New
13 York--establish themselves in New York State. It
14 would, just extending the tuition assistance
15 program would be minimal, the cost would be
16 minimal contrary to what we would be able to
17 receive the benefits as a State, we would be able
18 to receive. But it's also a moral imperative.
19 These children are here through no fault of their
20 own. They have been raised here, they do not
21 identify with any other country, many of them only
22 speak English and can never achieve a higher
23 education, were they to be returned to their
24 countries of origin. They have participated in
25 school projects and extracurricular activities,

1
2 they have been outstanding members of our
3 community. They have shown their courage over and
4 over again, by speaking out and putting themselves
5 at risk to advocate for the Dream Act. And if New
6 York State was to pass the Dream Act, they would
7 be fulfilling a promise that we must make all of
8 our children, that if you study hard and you work
9 hard, that good things will come. And our
10 government will be fulfilling a promise it must
11 make all of its citizens, that we live in a
12 society that values those who set the bar high,
13 who work to achieve those goals, and who
14 contribute to their community. And young men and
15 women like Jordana will, who never vi--who never
16 knowingly violated our laws, who've paid their
17 taxes, who sacrificed, will never have to be,
18 never have to feel let down by the State that they
19 call home again. Thank you.

20 [applause] [time bell]

21 BETHANY LEE: Good afternoon, my
22 name is Bethany Lee, and I'm an attorney at the
23 Asian American Legal Defense and Education Fund,
24 which is a national organization founded in 1974
25 to protect and promote the rights, civil rights of

1
2 Asian Americans. AALDEF strongly supports the New
3 York State Dream Act and Dream Fund legislation
4 and encourages the City Council to pass this
5 resolution. We believe that federal immigration
6 policy must adhere to basic human rights
7 principles that reflect the realities of the
8 nation and its residents, especially the millions
9 of undocumented people, who formed the economic
10 backbone of this country. As evident in our work,
11 the needs of immigrants in the United States
12 impact many policy areas and affect all aspects of
13 family life, from economic justice for workers, to
14 affordable housing for families, and education
15 equity for students. At our immigration clinics,
16 undocumented students routinely approach us with
17 questions not just about immigration issues, but
18 also about access to higher education. We have
19 recently begun working with Asian-American
20 students from New York and New Jersey, who are
21 launching their own youth group for Asian-American
22 Dreamers, advocating for the Dream Act. They tell
23 us that Asian undocumented youth are often
24 burdened by the model minority myth, and therefore
25 are often overlooked. Because they have been

1
2 unable to legalize their status, one of the
3 biggest issues that all of these students tell us
4 about is their struggle to pay for college. Many
5 undocumented students in our communities came as
6 children. Some were not even aware of their
7 undocumented status until they began applying to
8 college. Others grew up worrying about how they
9 would pay for college because despite being able
10 to get in, they cannot access financial aid, and
11 their families are unable to afford to pay their
12 tuition. Our federal immigration policies have
13 failed to meet the needs of these students and
14 their families. New York Dream legislation is
15 critical in helping to fill this unmet need for
16 thousands of students who are seeking financial
17 aid for higher education. New York is already one
18 of the twelve states that allow undocumented
19 students to qualify for in-state tuition for
20 public colleges. Despite this important step,
21 undocumented students continue to struggle to pay
22 for college, because they do not have equal
23 opportunity to access financial aid. New York
24 Dream legislation will ensure all students in the
25 State equal access to aid for higher education,

1
2 regardless of their immigration status.
3 Undocumented youth represent an abundance of
4 potential for a country and their families. In
5 the absence of federal solutions to fix our broken
6 immigration system, New York Dream legislation
7 helps to address the many needs of the thousands
8 of undocumented students in this State and their
9 families. Thank you.

10 [applause]

11 TONY CHOI: First of all, I would
12 like to acknowledge the Asian-American Legal
13 Defense and Education Fund for tirelessly being
14 the voice of our community and the New York City
15 Council for giving me this opportunity to testify
16 on behalf of the New York State Dream legislation.
17 My name is Tony Choi, and I am an undocumented
18 Korean-American. I was blessed enough to have
19 received a full tuition scholarship to attend
20 college, but all throughout my adolescence, the
21 question lingered on my mind, "How can a working
22 class, undocumented youth like me attend college?
23 I want to honor my mother and my sister, upon
24 whose tireless work that I stand today, by living
25 my life to the fullest. I also owed it to the

1
2 other undocumented youth who are struggling so
3 much for their education. As Ms. Bethany Lee
4 already mentioned, we are forming a group for
5 Asian-American undocumented youth here in New York
6 and New Jersey, to empower them to be a voice for
7 their communities. Groups like Aspire and Acasia
8 [phonetic] in Los Angeles and the Bay Area, were
9 tremendously successful in mobilizing Asian-
10 American youth for the California Dream Act, and
11 engaging young Asian-American leaders to broader
12 civic issues. We also seek to broaden the narrow
13 view of immigration only being a Latino issue.
14 Education has empowered me to speak out about my
15 situation and I was able to be able to connect it
16 to those who are already involved in working for
17 change in our communities. The undocumented
18 students that I know, take on two or three
19 grueling jobs and tackle challenging classes while
20 remaining faithful to their families. I implore
21 the New York City Council to stand with these
22 hardworking immigrant students, and to empower
23 them with education. As California and Illinois
24 blaze a trail with their state Dream Acts, it is
25 now up to New York to carry the torch of hope for

1
2 the immigrant community, just as the Statue of
3 Liberty does here in our harbor. As New York
4 takes the lead, I firmly believe that others will
5 soon follow suit. At a time in our history where
6 states like Arizona and Georgia have pointed their
7 fingers toward the immigrant community as a source
8 of blame, New York needs to stand strong with the
9 people that made our society so great. The New
10 York State Dream legislation will aid the Asian-
11 American communities tremendously, as empowerment
12 through education lies at the heart of our
13 communities. Just as the immigrants passed, we
14 seek to become contributing, productive members of
15 the society. We need to ensure that the American
16 Dream stays accessible to all segments of this
17 society. Thank you.

18 [applause]

19 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Okay, I just
20 want to thank you, as experts for having come in,
21 and to speak. And we thank you very much.

22 [applause]

23 [pause, background noise]

24 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Okay, next will
25 be John Demanga [phonetic] from BMCC, Borough of

1
2 Manhattan Community College, NYPIRG; Natalie
3 Lopez; Christopher Chavez; and Charles Harding.

4 [pause, background noise]

5 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Can I just ask
6 who's, who's speaking, what your names, please, so
7 we can see who's missing. Just if you tell us
8 your names first, so we can find, figure out who's
9 missing.

10 NATALIE LOPEZ: I'm Natalie.

11 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Okay.

12 JOHN DEMANGA: John Demanga.

13 CHRISTOPHER CHAVEZ: Christopher
14 Chavez.

15 CHARLES HARDING: Charles Harding.

16 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Mm-hmm.

17 [pause, background noise]

18 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Erica Brett,
19 Latino Youth for Higher Education. Okay, and if
20 you could start.

21 JOHN DEMANGA: Good afternoon. My
22 name is John Demanga, from Democratic Republic of
23 Congo. I am a student at the Borough of Manhattan
24 Community College, BMCC, and I work with my
25 college's chapter of the New York Public Interest

1
2 Research Group. On behalf of students working
3 with NYPIRG, across New York City, I appreciate
4 this opportunity to share our perspective on the
5 New York Dream Act. NYPIRG is a nonpartisan
6 research and advocacy organization. Our board of
7 directors consists entirely of college and
8 university students like me. For 39 years,
9 students working with NYPIRG have fought for a
10 more just and sustainable New York by advancing
11 important public interest issues, by affording
12 high education. I am here today to express our
13 support for City Council resolution number 803,
14 calling upon New York State's legislature to pass
15 and the Governor to sign the New York Dream Act.
16 In today's economy, a college degree is the most
17 important step on the ladder of success. People
18 who have a degree, a college degree, earn a
19 million dollars more than those who do not over
20 the course of their lives. So for million for New
21 Yorkers, a college degree represents the
22 opportunity to pursue the American Dreams.
23 Unfortunately, the thousands who pay taxes and
24 call America their home, that dream is being
25 deferred. That's why we are calling on the City

1 Council to pass this Resolution in support of the
2 New York Dreams Act. We believe that education is
3 a fundamental right and that access to it should
4 be universal. And in order to achieve universal
5 access, financial - - opportunity, like the
6 Tuition Assistance Program, must be available to
7 all of our high school graduates, regardless of
8 their immigration status. The Tuition Assistance
9 Program, TAP, was created in 1974 to maximize
10 access to higher education for all qualified
11 students. NYPIRG supported the Dream Act which
12 should allow eligible undocumented students to
13 apply for TAP. Students [time bell] students who
14 have called the New York State their home for the
15 majority of their lives deserve the opportunity
16 that financial aid provide. There is efforts
17 [phonetic] economy advantage that New York stands
18 to benefit from by enabling undocumented
19 immigrants to attain a college a degree. As noted
20 in recent reports by Fiscal Policy Institute, FPI,
21 the additional taxes paid by a New York who have a
22 bachelor's degree, a bachelor's is degree to
23 states local taxes a loan is \$3,900 a year. In a
24 time when New York's taxes base has diminished,

1
2 should we forego this opportunity to generate a
3 new revenue from a better equipped labor force?

4 Clearly, this is an opportunity to make a sound
5 investment in New York State's future.

6 Essentially, when extending TAP to eligible
7 undocumented students would increase TAP
8 expenditure by just two percentage each year.

9 According to NYSYLC, an estimated of \$146,000 New
10 Yorkers who have gone to our public school to be
11 educated by our teachers ineligible to receive
12 financial aid under state and federal law. The
13 vast majority unable to pursue a college degree
14 due to financial obstacles, with only five to ten
15 percent of undocumented students able to afford to
16 go to college, our investments in their success is
17 cut short at the time that we complete our
18 investment in their future, by expanding financial
19 aid opportunities. Many tough choices have to be
20 made to get the economy back on the track.

21 Investing in New York students can provide the
22 educated labor pool that attract businesses to our
23 states. College graduates are more than twice as
24 likely to be employed compared to their peers who
25 have only a high school degree. According to the

1
2 Federal Bureau of Labor Statistics, helping New
3 Yorkers no matter their immigration status, to
4 become qualified through high education to get the
5 job they needs, should be a top priority to
6 states. Appropriate New York Dreams Act
7 legislation outlined in City Council Resolution
8 No. 803 could help create an equal playing field
9 for all of our students. New York need to join
10 California, Texas and New Mexico in providing and
11 undocumented immigrants student access to states
12 financial aid through TAP. Thank you for
13 providing this opportunity for us to share our
14 thoughts on the New York Dream Act. We look
15 forward to working with you to ensure that all
16 college education is accessible and affordable for
17 all here in New York City.

18 [applause]

19 NATALIE LOPEZ: Good afternoon,
20 everyone. My name is Natalie Lopez, and I am an
21 undocumented student, currently attending Baruch
22 College, where this would be my last semester. At
23 the age of four, I arrived from Ecuador and I set
24 foot on American soil and have lived here ever
25 since. I grew up pledging allegiance to the flag

1
2 of the United States, and to the Republic for
3 which is stands, and believing in a just country
4 since the day I attended kindergarten to the day
5 that I graduated high school. Ladies and
6 gentlemen, I still believe that this is a just
7 country, and it continues to grow as a just
8 country, serving the people that call America
9 home. We have arrived at a crossroads for
10 America. We're at a time where decisions will
11 impact the lives of thousands of people, of young
12 people specifically, with grand dreams and ideas
13 to make the country a better place for all. But
14 in New York itself, there lies untapped potential.
15 Undocumented youth are forced to brush their
16 dreams aside, and lead a life, keeping to the
17 shadows, and never reaching their true potential.
18 But no more will this be the standard. We are no
19 different than our classmates who sit next to us
20 in our classes, who laugh with us during the lunch
21 hours, who study with us for midterms and finals.
22 We are no different from your children, who have
23 grown up in America, and we feel no different from
24 them. As parents, you would want what was best
25 for your child, including a college education and

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2 a degree, so they can fulfill their dreams. What
3 if your child was undocumented, and had the doors
4 of opportunity and success slammed in their face
5 after they worked so hard to get high grades in
6 high school. The undocumented students of New
7 York live to see the day where they can work as
8 doctors, lawyers, accountants, artists and
9 musicians. But how can they when they are refused
10 a scholarship, grants or access to - - itself.
11 This is why we are here today, to ask for the
12 Tuition Assistance Program, TAP, to be open to all
13 students who are eligible, regardless of their
14 immigration status. We are asking for the doors
15 of opportunity, success and prosperity to be once
16 more opened and our hopes and dreams to become a
17 reality. To Governor Cuomo and the New York City
18 Legislature, we urge you to pass this bill. You
19 will open a door of opportunities for talented,
20 highly skilled students. And most importantly,
21 you will be creating new jobs for the people of
22 New York. I am here to ask everyone who is
23 listening, who is watching, and those who are
24 fumbling with their thumbs, to allow me to fulfill
25 my dream of opening up my own company, thereby

1
2 creating jobs for those who are unemployed and
3 giving back to our economy, and our beloved State.
4 Ladies and gentlemen, I am an American. I want to
5 be able to have a job so I can pay my taxes, to
6 now worry about [time bell] counting how many
7 hours per week I have to work below minimum wage
8 to reach those \$2,805 for next semester. I want
9 to be able to walk down the street and know that I
10 can and will be able to graduate from college, get
11 my bachelor's and master's degree, and soon my
12 Ph.D. It began with a dream, but for New York I
13 know that it will be a reality. Thank you.

14 [applause]

15 CHRISTOPHER CHAVEZ: Good
16 afternoon, my name is Christopher. I, I was born
17 in Mexico and raised in The Bronx, a Yankees fan
18 since I can remember. I have been living in
19 Fordham Road, our neighborhood, for almost 20
20 years. I am proud of my neighborhood because it
21 reflects the working class families trying to make
22 a living every day. Juggling many jobs,
23 encouraging their children to continue the
24 education to better themselves. Like many in this
25 I come from a hardworking family that migrated to

1
2 this country looking for a better future for my
3 sister and I. They are not criminals, as some
4 people intend to portray them. But instead, they
5 are the most loving, caring parents anyone can
6 imagine. They are the ones who have had to
7 sacrifice many things to give me and my sister the
8 opportunities they did not have. I was not a
9 straight A student, but yet I was able to strive
10 and graduate from middle school. I did not want
11 to, I did not know what I wanted to do with
12 myself, but I didn't, I did know that I wanted to
13 be able to support my parents as they have always
14 supported me. Seeing the hard work of my sister
15 and family gave me the determination I needed to
16 continue my education. What I did not know is
17 that by my being undocumented, my road to college
18 was going to be much difficult. But this, but
19 with the support of my family and a few professors
20 who believed in me against all odds, an average
21 kid from The Bronx successfully enrolled and
22 graduated with an associate's in mathematics from
23 Bronx Community College. In fact, it was in BCC
24 where I met the math tutor who would later inspire
25 me to pursue a bachelor's degree in mathematics at

1
2 Lehman College, where I am currently in my last
3 semester. My road to college was everything but
4 easy. I work two jobs while going to school
5 fulltime. I recently dealt with the frustration
6 of an uncertain future with the fear to be
7 separated from my family. I, after all the
8 challenges, consider myself very lucky because I
9 had an a unconditional, emotional and at times
10 financial support of my family, who even if they
11 were struggling to pay for the monthly rent, would
12 help me cover tuition in order to make their son's
13 college education a reality. They were there for
14 me. Unfortunately, this is not the case for many
15 other young, undocumented students who see college
16 as an unattainable dream, due to high tuition,
17 even in public university of New York. Once I
18 enrolled in Lehman, I knew I wanted to create a
19 group that would give undocumented students like
20 myself the space to express themselves, by
21 supporting each other to get involved and finally
22 take charge of their own future. That is the main
23 reason why I, with the help of other passionate
24 Lehman students created the Lehman College Dream
25 Team, the first Dream Team part of the Dream

1
2 campus network supported by the New York State
3 Youth Leadership Council. [time bell] I am proud
4 to be a Lehman student, as much as I am proud to
5 say that I am undocumented. Because I am no
6 longer afraid to say that I am ready to make a
7 change, to share my story with those who will try
8 to dehumanize me and even those who terrorize my
9 communities. It is in Lehman College that I
10 became part of the Lehman College student
11 government. Being SGA has made me see how the
12 simplest of things can become the most abstract
13 and most complex. Nevertheless, it has also made
14 me open my eyes to seeing the bigger picture, or
15 why someone chooses to hold office. That is to
16 serve those that have put him or her in office,
17 and to help avoid the struggle that may still be
18 unheard of. It is, this same spirit that I am
19 most pleased to say that this past Sunday, the
20 CUNY University Student Senate unanimously passed
21 the resolution supporting the passage of the New
22 York State Dream Act. As student representatives,
23 they have done their part on making sure the
24 voices of the student bodies they represent
25 respectively are heard. Thus showing once more

1
2 that many support undocumented youth dreams to
3 continue their college education by opening access
4 to tuition assistance programs. So let us not
5 forget that as accountable representatives of
6 students or constituents, you and I have equal
7 responsibility to listen and act to bring a
8 solution to the struggles they face. I am here
9 today on behalf of many other undocumented youth
10 who attend CUNY, who as myself are still going
11 through difficult times, to continue the
12 education. I am here, I am here to make sure that
13 our voices, those of undocumented youth who are
14 not the poster child, but yet who have big dreams,
15 to succeed and make it in this concrete jungle,
16 are very well heard. We cannot let our voices and
17 stories be lost in political games. Our lives
18 cannot be forgotten by the State that has promised
19 us so much. New York has a chance to provide us
20 with some relief to continue our academic dreams.
21 Today, I join the call upon the New York State
22 Legislature to pass and Governor Cuomo to sign,
23 the New York Dream Act, A.06829/S.04179, which
24 would grant the opportunity to receive tuition
25 assistance program to eligible undocumented

1
2 immigrants. Signing and adding the New York Dream
3 Act in the Executive Budget is not only fair to
4 the children of New York, but it is an opportunity
5 for our great State to take a stand and lead the
6 country to a more just future for all. Thank you.

7 [applause]

8 ERICA RED: My name is Erica Red
9 [phonetic], known as Wendy. I'm a high school
10 graduate undocumented student. I'm from Mexico.
11 When I turned 15 years old, my mom decided to
12 bring me to the United States. At the beginning,
13 I was so happy because I had the opportunity to
14 see her again after five years. But I left behind
15 many important people in my life, like my two
16 little siblings. When I arrived to her house, I
17 met my new family. I realized that that was not
18 what I really expected. I had to start
19 everything, new school, new friends, including new
20 siblings. Being the older sister with 19 years
21 old makes me think that I have, that I am the
22 only, the one who has to be the role model for all
23 my siblings. I'm glad to be the older one, and I
24 know that I have to be more responsible about my
25 actions. And, and like any other girl her age, I

1
2 make my, I make mistakes. That's what I day after
3 day I try to learn from my good decisions and even
4 the bad ones. Today, I'm proud that I, I have
5 complete so far. I got right from high school and
6 I kept studying and I worked at community college.
7 Unfortunately, this semester I couldn't attend,
8 because I don't have enough money to pay for my
9 tuition, but hopefully I can come back next
10 semester. I met such good friends during my years
11 in high school, and I met people who made a big
12 change in my life. For example, Latino Youth for
13 Higher Education, LYHEP, a group of young people
14 that help and support students like me to take the
15 right path to the, to get into college. Sonia
16 Sendoya [phonetic], one of the founders of this
17 program, told me once, "Like can be hard, but it's
18 not impossible." When I think about this, I
19 remember that hard times that I have to deal about
20 how to get into college, being an undocumented
21 student. But thanks to them and their support, my
22 thoughts changed about my future. They help me,
23 step by step, how to apply and get into college,
24 and also after I graduate, they accept me as
25 entering their program. My first semester in

1
2 college were the toughest months, were the
3 toughest months of my life. All that, all that I
4 didn't want to do in high school, like talk in
5 front of people in English, I had to in my college
6 classes, in front of many strangers. During this
7 period, I learned how to be more confident about
8 myself. Now that I had to take a break, now that
9 I had to take a break out of college, I went to
10 take my first step like a real adult, and I start
11 working to pay my studies. My mom used to pay
12 for, for 'em, but I feel bad because she has to
13 work a lot for me and for my siblings, without any
14 help. I know my mom is proud of me, and I'm, and
15 I am even more proud of her. I am who I am
16 because of her. [time bell] I really want to do
17 the same for my brothers and sisters, and let my
18 mom to take a break. That's what I, that's why I,
19 the Dream Act is too important for me. I want to
20 have more opportunities in my life, to show my
21 siblings how to fight and achieve their goals and
22 dreams. To show, to show them how to do it, I
23 have to achieve my goals first. I'm still
24 learning how to become a leader. I want to be in
25 front, I want to speak out and say, "Hey, look at

1
2 me." Even so, that I'm undocumented student, I'm
3 here fighting for my dreams, and I know that you
4 can do the same, just need to believe and work
5 hard for a better future, your future. Douglas
6 Adams says once, "I may not have gone where I
7 attempt to go, but I think I have end up where I
8 need to be." [Spanish] Thanks.

9 [applause]

10 CHAIRPERSON RODRIGUEZ: Mucho
11 gracias. I just think that this society is not
12 ready to deal with us. I think that when you have
13 a city where more than 50 percent of the eight
14 million people, we've been in another country, I
15 think that it require different type of
16 leadership, to understand. The City change, and
17 we have to accommodate everyone, so that we have
18 sense of ownership of the City where we contribute
19 and where we've been raised. I listening to you,
20 I say it's still today, Spanish is my native
21 language. And I was born and raised in another
22 country, I came to this country when I was 19.
23 You were, you've been living here since your early
24 child education. So, in the future, these seats
25 belong to you. Sotomayor sits, Obama sit, - -

1 sit, belong to you. And I think that what
2 happened is a lot of people, they are afraid. So
3 instead of dealing with, you know what, like, if
4 we remove our skin, we're equal. It's culture,
5 religion, and - - that - - by our society. And I
6 think like yesterday, I was at Beacon High School.
7 And I was speaking to a group of students, few
8 Latino, color, most of them were white, very
9 progressive, good school. I write to see Beacon a
10 role model to all the school in the City. And I
11 was speaking to that group of student, like this
12 today, and I say, "I want to speak not to the
13 black and Latino." The issue was about with stop
14 and frisk, because I asked the question, "How many
15 of you have been stopped and frisked?" And it was
16 basically black and Latino who say, "We've been
17 stopped and frisked." Say my colleague, it's
18 black and Latino nation, my colleagues to the
19 white, we have a, especially the student
20 undocumented, we have a lot of friends, from the
21 Anglo community, a lot of people that they were
22 leading the antiwar movement in, in the '60s,
23 they--and there's a lot of people from the Asian
24 community from the, from the gays and lesbian
25

1
2 community, people that we know what it is to be
3 fighting for our right. And I think that, you
4 know what? Forget about the sign the Dream Act or
5 not, we're moving forward. We're moving forward,
6 and you will be the engineer who will be the--no
7 one will stop our future. Of course, like it is
8 our right to have the Dream Act. The Dream Act
9 will happen, and we will write another chapter.
10 What they only, my only expectation that I have
11 from you is, be a social justice fighter in our
12 society. We will get the Dream Act, I don't want
13 to see when I'm a senior citizen, in my 70s, and
14 looking around 20 years, younger than me, being
15 someone, talking about I used to. I went to a
16 hearing advocating for the Dream Act. I want to
17 see you when you are 50 or 45, being a leader,
18 fighting for social justice, in our society.
19 Because you have a lot of role model. Let's just
20 say, you have your mother, you have colleague, you
21 have a lot of friend in your school. And I think
22 that let's keep fighting, to get the dream act
23 done. But more than that, we have to continue
24 fighting for the 99 percent, because we are part
25 of that 99 percent. Thank you.

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[applause]

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Hear, hear.

Thank you very much. And thank you to the panel, as well. Thank you. Next we'd like to call up Michael Fabricant [phonetic], from the PSC; Ieda Carreno [phonetic] from CUNY Citizenship Now; Omar Murray [phonetic] from CUNY BMCC; and Alejandro Mali [phonetic] from City University of New York.

[pause, background noise]

MICHAEL FABRICANT: Good afternoon.

I'm Mike Fabricant, Treasurer of the Professional Staff Congress, City University faculty and staff union, and also a faculty member at Hunter College. On behalf of the 25,000 members of the Professional Staff Congress, I wish to thank Committee Chairpersons Rodriguez and Dromm, and the Members of the Council's Higher Education and Immigration Committees, for the opportunity to speak in support of the Council resolutions, urging passage of State Dream legislation, which would extend financial aid to undocumented immigrants, students who graduate high school or earn a GED in New York State. As a union, we're proud that a decade ago, New York State extended

1
2 access to a college education undocumented
3 immigrant students, many of whom are at CUNY. By
4 allowing them to pay in-state tuition rates at
5 CUNY and SUNY, if they attend a high school for
6 two years and graduate, or earn a GED degree here.
7 New York has been a leader in this regard, and the
8 in-state tuition law has made it possible for
9 thousands of undocumented students to obtain a
10 college degree. A lot of numbers have been thrown
11 around today, but it's our estimate that 4,500
12 undocumented students now attend CUNY, and many
13 more would be able to if needs based financial aid
14 was unavailable to them. I think some, one of the
15 things we need to assess is really trying to
16 arrive at an exact number at CUNY, a more precise
17 number. Our members see firsthand the heroic
18 efforts that immigrant students make to attend
19 college. Many have been articulated here today,
20 and many have been present here today. They're
21 hungry for a college education, and like the
22 majority of CUNY students, come from families of
23 very modest financial means. I want to underscore
24 that point. Fully 54 percent of all CUNY
25 undergraduates come from households with annual

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2 incomes under \$30,000 a year. But then I want to
3 further reinforce the point by saying that 38
4 percent get by on incomes less than \$20,000.
5 That's extraordinary to imagine that young people
6 from those families are finding ways to go to
7 college, but they do. It's common for these
8 students to work fulltime while going to college.
9 You've heard that here today, and it's no
10 surprise. And frequently they must take time off
11 from school to earn enough money to pay for the
12 next semester's tuition and fees. Again, you've
13 heard that here today. Students who are the
14 children of immigrants, that is they're first
15 generation Americans, and immigrant students who
16 have permanent legal status, are able to overcome
17 many of the financial hurdles that I've just
18 described with the help of federal Pell Grants and
19 the State Tuition Assistance Program, TAP.
20 Undocumented students, as we all know, however,
21 are barred from these programs, and it's also
22 worth noting that undocumented students do not
23 have access to bank loans, to finance their
24 education. The one large, large, publicly funded
25 scholarship program that was available to

1
2 undocumented students at CUNY in the past, was the
3 Vallone Scholarship program, but sadly, that
4 program, the Vallone program was discontinued last
5 spring. And again, that's something we have to do
6 something about. The ability to pay in-state
7 tuition at CUNY is an enormous benefit for
8 undocumented immigrant students. But as you are
9 aware, tuition's rising. Over the next five years
10 [time bell] it's estimated that that tuition will
11 increase by 25 percent. Without access to
12 financial aid or grants, undocumented students at
13 CUNY, who have to pay the whole sticker price, may
14 not be able to continue their education at such
15 prices. And so the PSC strongly supports the
16 Committee's resolution, calling on the Governor and
17 legislature to pass the New York Dream
18 legislation, not tomorrow, but today. Thank you.

19 [applause]

20 CHAIRPERSON RODRIGUEZ: Thank you.

21 OMAR MURRAY: Thanks. Good

22 afternoon, fellow students, lawmakers and guests.
23 My name is Omar Murray, I am a 27 year old
24 international student from Jamaica. I am the
25 former student government vice president of Bronx

1
2 Community College and I am currently a student
3 government center, student government senator, at
4 the Borough of Manhattan Community College, where
5 I am majoring in marketing. Today, I am here to
6 express my support for the New York State Dream
7 Act legislation. Within the City University of
8 New York, there are over 12,000 projected
9 international students and undocumented students.
10 At - - there's over 1,000 projected undocumented
11 students enrolled at BMCC. Each year, many of
12 these students enroll within BMCC with the dreams
13 of receiving a good education to better their
14 lives, their family and most of all the State of
15 New York. Yet, they do not qualify for in-state
16 tuition or financial aid. This proposed bill
17 marks a new and good chapter for New York State.
18 While I have great disappointment that this bill
19 failed to pass at the federal level, I am very
20 happy with the steps that New York State has taken
21 to pass this bill. Should this bill pass, it will
22 lead to many benefits which include the following:
23 an increase in tax revenue for New York State to
24 offset our State deficit; greater educational
25 opportunities for undocumented students enrolled

1
2 within the City University of New York and BMCC;
3 access to proper healthcare for undocumented
4 students that still live within the shadows; more
5 employment opportunities for undocumented students
6 that are enrolled in BMCC and the City University
7 of New York in general. Today, I call on the
8 State Legislature and the City Council to approve
9 this bill and I request that Governor Andrew Cuomo
10 sign this bill into law, not only for us, but for
11 New York State. Let us send a message to
12 Washington, that we are a nation of immigrants and
13 we are still passionate about values that affects
14 all. Thanks.

15 CHAIRPERSON RODRIGUEZ: Thank you.

16 [applause]

17 ALEJANDRO MATI: Before I start, I
18 just wanted to clarify a point that was raised
19 before. And it's in regards to the tuition. Even
20 though the past three years it has increased by 30
21 percent, at CUNY, the assistance that someone--one
22 of the Council Members mentioned, it's mostly for
23 legal students, not for undocumented students.
24 Most scholarships require you to have citizenship
25 or a green card. And one of the few exceptions

1
2 which was the Peter Vallone, was eliminated just a
3 few months ago. So, just to clarify that point.

4 And--

5 CHAIRPERSON RODRIGUEZ: [off mic]

6 I'm sorry, are you--

7 ALEJANDRO MATI: And, well--

8 CHAIRPERSON RODRIGUEZ: [off mic]

9 As far as, you know, is there any other
10 scholarship that - -

11 ALEJANDRO MATI: [interposing]

12 There, there's limited. That's the thing that for
13 undocumented students, unless it's a private, that
14 comes from like a fund or something like that,
15 most scholarships require you to have any forms of
16 legal status. But, but my name is Alejandro Mati
17 [phonetic] and I'm a, I'm currently a student at
18 John Jay College of Criminal Justice. And I'm
19 here today to speak on behalf of many of my dear
20 and close friends, and the students from across
21 the City that happens to be undocumented. You
22 see, these are all young men and women that
23 throughout most of their life, they have lived and
24 grown, grown up thinking that they're Americans.
25 I have a friend who graduated from high school

1
2 with 100 in her report card, and in the process of
3 applying for college, she found out that she was
4 undocumented. Thus, with working class parents,
5 and a brother already in college, she couldn't
6 afford to go to the college that she wanted to. I
7 have another friend who at the end of his senior
8 year in high school, he was approached by Harvard,
9 Columbia and Cornell, given his impressive scores
10 in his science and math Regents--which by the way
11 were one of the highest scores in the whole State
12 of New York that year. Yet because of this
13 status, he could not reach higher; because he was
14 undocumented, his success was limited to whatever
15 the law granted him. It was with sadness that we
16 found ourselves in December of 2010 when the U.S.
17 Senate killed the Dream Act, even though it had a
18 majority of the votes. For more than 1.3 million
19 Dreamers from across our country, it was yet
20 another opportunity for success crushed with
21 bigotry and xenophobia. Today, New York can make
22 a difference, for the tens of thousands of
23 Americans who happen to be undocumented. To be
24 able to be provided with an assistance and
25 security, so that they too can be part of this

1
2 great nation. The State Dream Act will allow our
3 working class students to be able to receive State
4 financial assistance without any discrimination
5 against their status. The Dream Act Fund will
6 greatly help all of the students who are brilliant
7 at what they do, to be able to receive private
8 scholarships so that they, too, can afford to
9 attend one of our prestigious New York
10 Universities. You see, we might have the next
11 Albert Einstein, or Steve Jobs within one of those
12 Dreamers. But by denying them the chance to
13 succeed, we ourselves are denying our country the
14 ability to stay competitive. As President Obama
15 said in 2011, the State of the Union, "Let's stop
16 - - talented and responsible young people who
17 could be staffing our research labs or starting a
18 new business, who could be further enriching this
19 nation." Let us put pressure on our State
20 Legislators, and more importantly on our Governor,
21 for him to finally come out [time bell] and defend
22 this group that has been marginalized by the petty
23 politics of yesterday. I applaud the City Council
24 on these very too important resolutions, and I
25 hope that Albany can actually listen and see that

1
2 although nationally it's toxic to talk about the
3 Dreamers, New York can make a difference, because
4 we do not put our heads down, whenever an issue
5 gets too complicated. We rise to the occasion and
6 we lead as an Empire State can only do. And we
7 are that state. So, let us pass this resolution
8 through the City Council and send a clear message
9 to Albany, that we want the Dream Act. Thank you.

10 [applause]

11 SOPHIA CARRENO: Good afternoon,
12 Chairman Dromm and Members of the New York City
13 Council Immigration Committee. My name is Sophia
14 Carreno [phonetic], I am the Interim
15 Communications and College Relations Specialist of
16 CUNY Citizenship Now. I want to offer on behalf
17 of my Director Len Wernik [phonetic], I want to
18 offer his regrets for not being able to attend
19 today. He also asked me to let you know that he
20 supports my testimony. I appreciate the
21 opportunity to testify on behalf of Chancellor
22 Matthew Goldstein and the University in support of
23 the principles inherent in the New York State
24 Dream Act. Chancellor Goldstein has issued the
25 statement expressing his strong support for

1
2 legislation that will allow undocumented students
3 to receive New York State funded financial aid.
4 Before I continue, as a former CUNY student, I
5 would like to commend the City Council, Members of
6 this Committee and its Chair, for its ongoing
7 support for the empowerment of New York's
8 immigrant youth. Having attended two CUNY
9 colleges and as a former student government
10 activist, I am aware of the many difficulties
11 faced by undocumented students. CUNY supports
12 equality and access for all those in pursuit of
13 higher education. Chancellor Goldstein was one of
14 the first university chancellors or presidents to
15 write to Congress in support of the federal Dream
16 Act. While Congress has yet to act, CUNY remains
17 hopeful that in the next two years, Congress will
18 recognize the incredible potential that will be
19 unleashed when the federal Dream Act becomes law.
20 Meanwhile, New York can join California, New
21 Mexico and Texas, by easing the path to a college
22 education for undocumented youth, by providing
23 access to financial aid. We like to call CUNY the
24 immigrant friendly university, yet despite our
25 efforts, access to higher education is unavailable

1
2 to many undocumented students. As undocumented
3 students are ineligible for state and federal
4 financial aid, many cannot afford to study at all,
5 and others are forced to study fulltime, I'm
6 sorry, part-time. While CUNY makes privately
7 funded scholarships available to undocumented
8 students, these programs are available only to a
9 small group. Limitations placed on our financial
10 aid programs by state and federal law means that
11 undocumented students are barred from receiving
12 TAP, Pell and other government financed programs.
13 This needs to change. As Chancellor Goldstein
14 noted in his November 2011 statement on the New
15 York State Dream Act, students who graduate from a
16 New York State high school should be eligible to
17 receive government supported financial assistance,
18 if they have earned their high school degrees in
19 New York. And under state law, are eligible to
20 attend public colleges, they ought to have access
21 to the support they need to advance their
22 education, especially at a time when New York
23 needs a skilled workforce. At CUNY, we make every
24 effort to make CUNY available to undocumented
25 students and to other immigrant students. Through

1
2 CUNY's Citizenship Now, we've helped thousands of
3 students on the path to U.S. citizenship. CUNY's
4 is the most comprehensive college or university
5 based immigration legal service program in the
6 country. The project now has six campus based
7 immigration law assistance centers providing
8 comprehensive immigration law services free to all
9 New Yorkers. In the last fiscal year alone, we
10 helped 11,507 New Yorkers with their immigration
11 law needs, including helping 4,164 with U.S.
12 citizenship. The University remains deeply
13 committed to maintaining its proud tradition of
14 welcoming and educating all immigrants. The
15 tradition was forced over many generations and is
16 reflected in the extraordinary diversity of our
17 student body. We wholeheartedly support efforts
18 to pass this State legislation that will
19 undocumented students to qualify for New York
20 State financial aid and urge this Committee to do
21 what it can to make that dream a reality. Thank
22 you.

23 [applause]

24 CHAIRPERSON RODRIGUEZ: John

25 [phonetic], from the PSC perspective, like when

1
2 you say that they, there's a estimate of 4,500
3 undocumented student at CUNY. I assume that, and
4 at least I don't know what experience my colleague
5 here have when he was a teacher, but I know that
6 working at a high school, many of the student who
7 were undocumented who got into CUNY, when we look
8 at retention, retention was very low. Many of
9 them got into community college or senior college,
10 they stay there for a year, or a year-and-a-half,
11 and then because of the financial situation, many
12 of them decided not to continue their pursuit of
13 higher education because they could not afford.
14 Have the PSC look at what is a dropout of
15 undocumented students after they are enrolled at
16 CUNY? Or anyone for CUNY, like--

17 MICHAEL FABRICANT: We don't have
18 access to those figures - - it would certainly be
19 interesting--

20 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Could you speak
21 into the mic?

22 MICHAEL FABRICANT: It certainly
23 would be interesting to look at those figures and
24 track 'em in relationship to the larger student
25 body, see what the discrepancies are, and also see

1
2 what factors, if any, are differentially affecting
3 undocumented students as contrasted to the rest of
4 the student body. We don't have, at the moment,
5 access to those figures, but it seems to me that's
6 something that should--but again, there are issues
7 of confidentiality, there are a whole series of
8 issues that will have to be contemplated
9 simultaneously.

10 CHAIRPERSON RODRIGUEZ: And I look
11 at the number very low, 4,500, like--and I don't
12 have the number with me right now, how many
13 student graduated from New York City Public
14 School? And I don't know if you have any estimate
15 number on what is the graduation number of New
16 York--but when we look about 4,500, it, as a
17 estimate one, or the student at CUNY, I think
18 about it like, I mean, we're talking about a
19 particular population that it's not that they are
20 not at CUNY, because of what a sector and the - -
21 and SUNY and other places. Many of the
22 undocumented student, it has CUNY as a, as the
23 only choices. And so when I look having the
24 estimate of 4,500, I assume that also PSC and CUNY
25 agree that if we approve the Dream Act, the

1
2 percentage of undocumented students continue to
3 higher education, will multiply big time from
4 those 4,500.

5 MICHAEL FABRICANT: I would assume
6 that that would be the case, but we don't, you
7 know, we don't know. At the moment, what we do
8 know is this: that 75 to 80 percent of the
9 students in CUNY graduate New York City high
10 schools. And so, we will see, I mean, the
11 University that will see the folks who are
12 graduating or undocumented, and will like, will in
13 all probability be CUNY, it'll, you know, so that
14 it's consistent with the point you're making.

15 CHAIRPERSON RODRIGUEZ: Thanks.

16 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Okay, I'd like
17 to thank this panel. And I'll call the next.
18 Thank you very much. John Moreno [phonetic],
19 Latino Youth for Higher Education; Catherine
20 Ardilla [phonetic], Latino Youth for Higher
21 Education; Jacqueline Viville [phonetic], is she,
22 Vimo [phonetic]. She here?

23 JACQUELINE VIMO: [off mic} Yeah,
24 I'm right here.

25 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Oh, good, okay.

1
2 And Johan Garcia. [pause, background noise] Why
3 don't you get started, John?

4 JOHN MORENO-ESCOBAR: Thank you,
5 Daniel, thank you for having us here today.
6 Before I started, I want to just really quick go
7 over why it's that we are here with our students
8 today. And it's because I was myself--I am myself
9 an immigrant. I came from Colombia when I was 18
10 years old, I was fortunate to graduate back home
11 from my high school degree. And I came to be part
12 of the CUNY system, and I started my education at
13 La Guardia Community College where I obtained my
14 associate's degree in business administration.
15 And then after that, I received a full ride in
16 Baruch College to, to do my bachelor's degree in
17 public affairs, and right after that I was
18 involved a lot with the student government and I
19 play soccer for the school, which helped me to put
20 my eyes on the spot for the President and Dean of
21 the School of Politic Affairs, which helped me to
22 pay for my master's program. And before I
23 graduated for my undergraduate, I actually
24 established a not-for-profit to get back to the
25 Latino community and it's the organization that we

1 represented, that we have representatives today
2 are students from our program. My name is John
3 Moreno-Escobar, I'm the Executive Director and
4 Founder of Latino Youth for Higher Education
5 Program. LYHEP is a not-for-profit organization
6 that provides college readiness awareness programs
7 for recent immigrant Latinos in New York City.
8 LYHEP is made up of minority immigrants both
9 professionals and college students who focus on
10 promoting college awareness in minority, middle
11 and high school students and their families. We
12 especially work with Latinos that have been
13 recently arrived in the country. This goal is
14 addressed through the creation of worship,
15 tutoring, college visits and supported, supporting
16 undocumented Latino minority, undocumented Latino
17 minorities with the scholarships and fundraising
18 activities in order to assist and close the
19 achievement gap. Nearly 40 percent of the New
20 York City residents are immigrants. 20 percent
21 are undocumented, according to the Pew Institute
22 Analysis of 2000 Census. The Dream, the Dream Act
23 would allow these young people to come out of
24 their shadows, feel productive after high school,
25

1
2 enter a community college or a senior college,
3 graduate and have the opportunity to unleash all
4 their potential. Many student, many students in
5 the New York City high schools drop out because
6 they don't have any hope of getting into college
7 as a consequence of their immigration status.

8 Also, it's important to mention that this, that
9 this State has been always characterized by being
10 progressive, and that's why not just the State,
11 but the government not, but not just the State
12 government is looking into the bill. But the New
13 York Board of Regents have stated the draft of
14 their own bill. During the last five years of my
15 organization, has been working with Latino and
16 minority students to help them to achieve their
17 dreams. Our program started at - - International
18 High school, a school that is composed of 100
19 percent Latinos, and they all have to be recent
20 immigrants, less than five years in the United
21 States, in order to be in the school. Many of
22 them are undocumented. I will say 80 percent of
23 the population [time bell] of the school. We work
24 with their families, we make college possible for
25 them. Today, I'm here with the, with the

1 students, with a graduate student of that school.
2 They are Dreamers. They have helped many of their
3 peers with their college application, regardless
4 of knowing that they don't have the same options.
5 I believe in your leadership and vision of a
6 country, a state that can be equal, and receives
7 all the students we love. There are honor
8 students, there are leaders, that love this state
9 and this country. Please use all your political
10 power to make college a reality for these
11 students. Gandhi said once, "The future depends
12 on what we do in the present." Thank you.

14 CATHERINE ARDILLA: Well, good
15 afternoon, my name is Catherine Ardilla. I am 17
16 years old, and I am currently undocumented. My
17 parents decided to bring me to the United States
18 from Colombia when I was just ten years old. I
19 had no option, I could not choose, I just had to
20 do it. I came thinking that it will not be for
21 too long. I thought I will go back and see my
22 grandmother and the rest of my family again. But
23 as you can all see, I'm still here. My
24 grandmother died two years ago, without me having
25 the opportunity to see her again, or saying

1
2 goodbye. I remember once my grandma telling me to
3 never give up and to fight for everything I
4 wanted, to not let any obstacles take over my
5 life. Today, I am doing what she told me. I am
6 fighting for what I know is the best for my
7 future, and for the future of many people who went
8 through many struggles to be in this country. I
9 am currently a high school student, and I am
10 graduating in June 2012. During my years in high
11 school, Latino Youth for Higher Education has
12 guided me and showed me that there are too many
13 opportunities for Latino youth, but they have also
14 tell me that you have to work for, you have to
15 work hard for what you want. Nothing will just
16 come to you for free. Life have also guide my
17 throughout these last three years, and showed me
18 the right path to get into college. They have
19 motivated me to go on with my life, but most
20 important to never forget about the ones who will
21 be on the same path I am today, and my obligation
22 to help them. This has been one of the toughest
23 years I have ever been through. But who said that
24 senior year was easy? Well, it is never easy for
25 normal high schools students. But it is harder

1
2 for undocumented students. I had to see all my
3 peers applying to their dream college, fill in
4 their forms while I had to think about how am I
5 going to pay for college years. It has been a
6 really difficult year for me and others. And even
7 though I couldn't apply to - - I learned the whole
8 process to be a youth leader at my school, and
9 help my peers so they can go to college and make a
10 difference. The Dream Act is important because it
11 will benefit students like me, students who did
12 not choose to come to this country, a student who
13 actually care about how hard their parents had to
14 work for them to be here, and have more
15 opportunities in life. The Dream Act will benefit
16 the United States and New York State as a whole,
17 because it will give the country the opportunity
18 to have more educated people. People who are
19 working because they care, because it's their
20 passion and because they just want to be, to, they
21 just want a better future. I urge you to support
22 the Dream Act. Education is power, it's life, and
23 it's the only way of paying back to all the
24 parents their hard work, and everything they had
25 to go through for us to be here. Thank you.

1
2 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you. And
3 Jackie, just before you start, I just want to
4 thank you for waiting, and also for the leadership
5 role that your organization has taken in this
6 issue, and I appreciate that very much. Thank
7 you.

8 JACQUELINE VIMO: Thank you. I
9 mean, we're here because of the Dreamers that are,
10 that are with me here today. My name is Jackie
11 Vimo, and I'm the Director of Advocacy at the New
12 York Immigration Coalition, for those of us you
13 do, who don't know us, we're an umbrella
14 organization representing about 200 organizations
15 that work with immigrants across New York State;
16 I'm also a founding member and a steering
17 committee member of the New York State Dream
18 Coalition, that brings together about 30 different
19 organizations, many of whom have spoken here in
20 the room. And we're really leading the campaign
21 to pass Dream in New York State. I also want to
22 thank, you know, Chairmen Dromm and Rodriguez for,
23 you know, holding this really important hearing
24 today. I think a lot of what I've said has been
25 covered, so I'm, you can refer to testimony, but I

1 want to talk about the State context on a national
2 level, specifically in comparing it to what's
3 happening in other states around the, the country.
4 Now we know that we're here today because
5 Washington has failed to act. Washington has
6 failed to do their job. For over ten years,
7 there's been comprehensive immigration reform and
8 Dream legislation stalled in Congress. And now
9 we're left to pick up the pieces here in New York.
10 But, you know, I think that one of the important
11 things to do, to remember, is that we here in New
12 York can do things, and that has immediate
13 benefits for Dreamers that need relief right now,
14 but also that it sends a really strong message to
15 Washington. So, as many people have already said,
16 there are already 13 states around, across the
17 country, including New York, have passed in-state
18 tuition laws. That's an important first step, to
19 say that if you've been here, that the person
20 who's been sitting next to you in your classroom,
21 for the last, you know, maybe 17 years of your
22 life, you should have the same access to in-state
23 tuition as they do. That's common sense. But
24 also, New York is falling behind. Because there's
25

1
2 already four states who have passed Dream
3 legislation. Texas was the first in 2001. Are we
4 going to let Texas beat New York in terms of being
5 a leader, on the foreground of immigrant rights?
6 You know, we are not Alabama and we are not
7 Arizona, but we should be in the same place that
8 Texas, California, Illinois and New Mexico are,
9 and we should join them. [applause] Yeah. This
10 is an issue of New York pride, right? Because
11 we're New Yorkers, and we, all of us have said
12 that we're an immigrant state. And we don't want
13 to fall behind in sending that message. I will
14 say a couple of other things, just responding
15 quickly to some of the questions. I know that
16 Chairman Rodriguez brought up around the issue of,
17 that a lot of people will increase using TAP, if
18 they're undocumented. Well, now one of the things
19 people have been saying is if, you know, if we
20 open this program up, it's going to throw the
21 budget into chaos, every single Republican that we
22 talk to says, you know, "I would do it, but you
23 know, the budget is going to get out of control."
24 The fact o the matter is, Texas has been doing
25 this for ten years. And it has not thrown their

1 budget into chaos, everything has been fine. It
2 has been the right thing to do. In Texas, just
3 one percent of the top budget goes to undocumented
4 students. You know, we hope that more
5 undocumented students go to college, but I think
6 that one of the biggest challenges that we're
7 facing is the notion that, that if we do this, you
8 know, it's, it's going to have devastating
9 economic impacts. And the truth of the matter is,
10 it's a very, very low cost, the right thing to do.
11 It's the right thing to do morally, it's the right
12 to do economically [time bell] and I hope New York
13 can take its place at the head of the United
14 States in terms of sending a message to Washington
15 that if Texas can do it, California can do it,
16 Illinois can do it, New Mexico can do it, the New
17 York should and must do it, too. Thank you.

18 [applause]

19 JOHAN GARCIA: Thanks, Jackie.

20 Good afternoon, City Council Members,
21 distinguished guests and fellow panelists. My
22 name is Johan Garcia, and I would like to thank
23 you for allowing me to express my strong support
24 for the New York Dream Act. I am a Dreamer. I'm
25

1
2 also proud to serve as a Student Investment
3 Ambassador with the City University of New York,
4 Ernesto Malave Leadership Academy. CUNY has been
5 instrumental in supporting my economic success and
6 I am honored to speak out in support on my fellow
7 CUNY students who are also dreamers. I would also
8 like to take this opportunity to thank the
9 Chancellor, Matthew Goldstein, and the - - for
10 Student Affairs, Sanchez, for the leadership,
11 support in the New York Dream Act. I emigrated
12 from Puebla, Mexico nine years ago, in pursuit of
13 the American Dream. The U.S. to me represented
14 diversity, success and education. There were all
15 the things I like in my native country in Mexico.
16 I was unable to finish high school because of my
17 family economics hardships. I had to work to help
18 cover my family's basic needs. However, I was
19 always longing for greater opportunities. And I
20 knew that I could accomplish anything I set, I set
21 in my mind, too. Once I had arrived in the U.S.,
22 I secure my first job as a dishwasher in a diner.
23 At first, I became disillusioned and lost sight of
24 my goal of becoming an educated person. I had to
25 face my, I had to face many obstacles in my way.

1
2 Thankfully, my family, my family never lost faith
3 in me. My brother quickly enrolled me in English
4 classes. He also remind me that I have made the
5 journey to accomplish my dream of becoming a
6 successful professional, and that I had the
7 potential to conquer my goals. Although, I still
8 work in the restaurant business, I will continue
9 to pursue my dream of becoming a United States
10 Senator. I know that being undocumented has made
11 achieving my goals more challenging. And I, like
12 many immigrants, I'm also forced to live in the
13 shadows. We lack opportunities, and are required
14 to deal with what we have. Yet, life is not
15 supposed to be that way. We shall not be, we
16 shall not be forced to live with this way. We
17 must not let our current circumstances determine
18 our future. We have power to change them. I am
19 determined to succeed. In these nine years, I
20 have complete two years of English classes at the
21 New York Language Center, I recently earned my
22 associate's degree in business administration from
23 the Borough of Manhattan Community College, BMCC,
24 with a concentration on travel - -. While
25 attending BMCC, I was an active student leader and

1
2 served as President of the Travel - - Club, and
3 also as a student government senator. I have also
4 sought opportunities in public service, and have
5 interned in the Mayor's Office of Adult Education,
6 the New York City Council with Council Member
7 Rodriguez' office [time bell] and most recently
8 with U.S. Senator Kirsten Gillibrand. Moreover, I
9 had the pleasure of also being a member of the - -
10 Committee of the New York Youth Leadership
11 Council, where we are strongly urging the passage
12 of the New York Dream Act. My academic and
13 professional career doesn't stop there. As part
14 of the Dream fellowship, I had the opportunity to
15 intern at one of the New York Immigration
16 Coalition members organizations, the New York
17 Civic Participation Project NYCPP. This
18 organization has provided me with opportunities to
19 work for the community and advocate on behalf of
20 Dreamers. For example, a few weeks ago, I went to
21 a meeting on Long Island, where I made a
22 presentation on the New York Dream Act
23 legislation. At the end of my presentation,
24 people seemed to be excited and motivated, and I
25 realized that people do care about what happens

1
2 around them, and all they needed is someone to
3 motivate them to act. Thanks to the leadership
4 training of the New York Immigration Coalition, I
5 further developed my advocacy skills. I will use
6 this newly gained experienced to become a
7 successful student leader at Hunter College. Upon
8 my completion of my BA, I plan to attend Harvard
9 to become a human rights lawyer, and I will
10 continue to pursue my dream of becoming a U.S.
11 Senator. I'm a Dreamer. Perhaps I don't have
12 everything I wish I had right now, but I have the
13 hope, courage and motivation to follow my dreams.
14 In conclusion, I request the New York City Council
15 to, to urge the State Legislature and the
16 Governor, to support the pass--to support and pass
17 the New York Dream Act, a bill that will allow
18 many undocumented youth, like myself, to further
19 our education and continue with the pursuit of our
20 dreams. Thank you.

21 [applause]

22 CHAIRPERSON RODRIGUEZ: - - Johan,
23 that at the time when he was, he got, what was it,
24 GPA from BMC?

25 JOHAN GARCIA: Two point something.

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2 CHAIRPERSON RODRIGUEZ: But at the
3 time when he was there, he was working overnight,
4 so he was a type of schedule, they didn't work at
5 10:00 p.m. and came in at like 4:00 or 5:00 in the
6 morning. And then it still--

7 JOHAN GARCIA: 7:00 in the morning.

8 CHAIRPERSON RODRIGUEZ: 7:00 in the
9 morning, they're still having the time to dedicate
10 a number of hours to be doing the internship in
11 our office. So, there's nothing that can stop
12 your future, see, thank you.

13 JOHAN GARCIA: Thank you.

14 [applause]

15 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Okay, thank
16 you. Our next panel is Sneha Goud [phonetic] from
17 SAYA; Cassandra Guzman from Make the Road;
18 Christina Chang from Ming Kwon; and Sister Kelly
19 Carpenter from Cabrini Immigrant Services.

20 [pause, background noise]

21 KELLY CARPENTER: Good afternoon,
22 and thank you for this opportunity. My name's
23 Sister Kelly Carpenter, I'm the Director and
24 Attorney at Cabrini Immigrant Services. When I
25 think about Dream Act legislation, I think about

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2 that day, December 18th, 2010, when our U.S.
3 Senate failed to support our youth, our
4 communities, and our future. That morning,
5 Cabrini Immigrant Services was hosting a Christmas
6 party for about 100 of our community. That day
7 began with such joy, happiness, and anticipation,
8 but ended in tears. It was devastating for us.
9 Even more devastating was to hear elected
10 officials call the proposal not a Dream Act but a
11 nightmare act. Despite the setback, Cabrini
12 Immigrant Services and the youth and community
13 members with whom we collaborate, rallied. We
14 rallied because we know that the Dream Act
15 legislation will pass because it must pass. We
16 are counting on New York State to lead the way.
17 We believe and trust in New York State's longtime
18 tradition of justice, inclusion and opportunity
19 for all. We believe and trust that elected
20 representatives throughout New York State grasp
21 the reality that is before them. The reality that
22 many people born outside the United States are
23 fully integrated members of our communities. Many
24 are already citizens, many more are future
25 citizens. Cabrini Immigrant Services has been in

1
2 the Lower East Side since 1999. We have seen many
3 of these Dreamers grow up. These young people are
4 not nightmares. They are beautiful, intelligent
5 and gifted. They are Americans and they want,
6 need and deserve the opportunity to pursue their
7 dreams of higher education, and become
8 contributing members of the communities to which
9 they belong. Passing Dream Act legislation will
10 only add two percent to the cost of the Tuition
11 Assistance Program, but it will result in much
12 greater economic benefits for the State of New
13 York, as our youth with college degrees join the
14 labor force and attract higher paying jobs. I am
15 grateful for this opportunity to speak to you
16 today. Dream Act legislation will pass because it
17 must pass. And our communities are counting on
18 New York State to lead the way. I respectfully
19 request City Council Members to support the two
20 resolutions before you today, and urge Governor
21 Cuomo to take the right path and the only path
22 [time bell] and the only path for the future of
23 our state and our economy, by making it possible
24 for New York State Dreamers to pursue higher
25 education. Thank you.

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[applause]

CHRISTINA CHANG: Good afternoon, my name is Christina Chang, and I'm the Advocacy and Organizing Association at the Minkwon Center for Community Action. The Center would like to thank Council Member Dromm and Rodriguez for this important hearing. And for those of you who don't know, we are a grassroots organization located out in Flushing, Queens, serving the needs and concerns of the Korean American community. Passage of the Dream legislation, and in particular the Dream Act, is of great importance to the Asian-American community, the fastest growing population in New York City, youth in our community are severely disadvantaged, facing serious language barriers and one of the highest risks of dropping out of high school. Many immigrant parents usually work long shifts to support their families and are not able to participate in their children's education. Many of our youth are counted among the one out of seven Korean-Americans who are undocumented in New York City. For undocumented youth in our community, the final insurmountable obstacle to

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2 attaining a higher education is most often the
3 inability to access public financial assistance.
4 We should be investing in the dreams of students
5 like Emily Park, a dreamer and a neuroscience
6 major at Queens College, who wants to pursue
7 medicine. For Emily, passage of the Dream legis--
8 of Dream legislation is not only about greater
9 access to financial aid, but a recognition that
10 she, too, has a right to higher education, that
11 she is a good enough American kid. Smart and
12 hardworking students like Emily should not feel
13 that they need to live in the shadows. Our
14 undocumented youth, our children, should be told
15 that they are indeed worthy, and have the right to
16 pursue their dreams. The Minkwon Center has taken
17 this message to our community, and our community
18 has responded with overwhelming support. Through
19 street and church outreach we have collected over
20 1,300 petitions urging the State Legislature and
21 Governor Cuomo to pass Dream legislation. And we
22 now call on the City Council to take action,
23 represent our community, not only by passing the
24 resolutions that are under consideration, but by
25 urging Governor Cuomo to ensure that the Dream Act

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2 is included in his Executive Budget. Thank you
3 for your time.

4 [applause]

5 SNEHA GOUD: Hello, my name is
6 Sneha Goud and I'm the Development Associate at
7 South Asian Youth Action. On behalf of the youth,
8 staff and board of SAYA, I want to thank Council
9 Member Dromm and Council Member Rodriguez, and the
10 rest of the City Council for the opportunity to
11 speak today. SAYA provides comprehensive youth
12 development programs for low income South Asian
13 youth in New York City. Through academic
14 leadership, sports, arts and counseling programs,
15 SAYA presents youth with the possibility to expand
16 their horizons and realize their dreams. In our
17 15 year history, SAYA has opened the door to over
18 7,700 youth who are often the first in their
19 family to attend high school and pursue college in
20 the United States. Many of our youth are
21 undocumented or face immigration challenges.
22 Despite being raised in this country, our youth
23 who are qualified to attend college unfortunately
24 may not be eligible for financial aid. These
25 youth and their families are hardworking members

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2 of our community, and deserve the chance to
3 succeed. For example, Radju [phonetic] is a SAYA
4 youth who also happens to be an undocumented
5 immigrant. He graduated from high school in
6 Queens and also attends Queens College. He
7 aspires to get a better paying job than his
8 immigrant parents have. Unfortunately, he is
9 unable to access any financial aid and works off
10 the books because he can't get a job legally. His
11 below minimum wage paying job doesn't cover his
12 college costs, and the hours don't accommodate his
13 classes. He is burning out and we risk him
14 dropping out of college altogether. Radju is not
15 alone. There are many stories like his that the
16 passage of the Dream Act and the Dream Fund can
17 help create a happy ending for. Thank you.

18 [applause]

19 CASSANDRA GUZMAN: Good afternoon,
20 my name is Cassandra Guzman. I joined the Make
21 the Road, I'm an active member. Come from
22 Flushing High School. I'm undocumented and I'm
23 not, I'm not afraid to say it, even though a lot
24 of people in this world that are undocumented and
25 stay in the shadows, don't say it and they just

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2 dropped out of school. I see a lot kids like my
3 age, my situation, that go through like, "Why do I
4 get high grades? Why do I succeed? Why do I help
5 the community, a community doesn't even like think
6 about giving me the chance to continue my
7 education." For me, I also thought that, for a
8 few seconds in my life, but I realize that seeing
9 my mother, how she suffered, how she went through
10 the streets collecting cans, to bring me here
11 because she didn't have enough money to even
12 support her own, with her own food. So, I say,
13 "Why should I stop that?" Like my mom fought so
14 much, why should I just give up, and let others
15 stop me from succeeding my dream? I say, even
16 though my parents will not give me everything or
17 try to give me everything, I would say if I go to
18 college, I might be having the opportunity to give
19 them back, and also to help my community. I'll be
20 able to succeed in life and I will also include
21 like the taxes and help others. Not only by
22 financial but also through my ideas, new ideas,
23 new things, always new ideas is better than only
24 having the old ones. Thank you.

25 [applause]

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2 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you,
3 everyone, again, for that testimony. And I just
4 want to say, you know, I remember where I was
5 December 18th, also, they passed Don't Ask, Don't-
6 -Don't Ask, Don't Tell the same day. And my
7 community was ecstatic about that. And I was on
8 Roosevelt Avenue, and I met people who were coming
9 from Make the Road, and we had just gotten the
10 news that it hadn't, the Dream Act hadn't passed
11 in Congress. So, it was just a, a very mixed
12 emotional day for me. And hopefully we can turn
13 that situation around. Thank you all.

14 [applause]

15 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: John Minyu
16 [phonetic], Ann Marie Shrouder Gail [phonetic],
17 Alden Nesbitt [phonetic], Janet Yates. Janet is
18 from the Black Institute. Alden Nesbitt, Black
19 Institute, as well. And Ann Marie Shrouder Gail
20 is from Medgar Evers College. [pause, background
21 noise] Okay, thank you, why don't we just get
22 started.

23 JONG MIN: Okay, yeah. I would
24 like to first say how grateful and honored I am
25 here today, and would like to thank others for

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2 this opportunity. I would thank the Council and
3 all its members for having this important hearing.
4 This is another great step in promoting the hopes
5 and dreams of so many immigrant students here in
6 New York.

7 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: And just state
8 your name, for the record, also.

9 JONG MIN: Okay, okay. My name is
10 Jong Min, and I'm currently 32 years old. I was
11 born in Seoul, South Korea, in 1980, and my
12 parents decided the next year in '81, to come to
13 the United States. We arrived to the great city
14 of Nashville, Tennessee, and after about seven
15 years moved to New York, where I did continue my
16 grade school education, then went to Mark Twain
17 Stuyvesant and started high school. I happened to
18 be a good student, even great one, but then I
19 discovered my undocumented status at Stuyvesant,
20 which turned my whole life upside down.

21 Nevertheless, I did grad--manage to go back to
22 college in Tennessee, where I graduated magna cum
23 laude, with a degree in sociology, with a
24 concentration in criminal justice and minor in
25 psychology, all the way back in 2003. Then after

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2 graduation, returned to New York City. My story
3 is a little bit more unusual in that it's what
4 happens after all the education. And so for the
5 last nine years, I've worked at a pizzeria, flower
6 shop, various construction sites, and at my
7 parents' grocery store. It's been very bleak and
8 humbling to say the least, even with my college
9 degree and working all these under-the-table jobs.
10 I'm here today because I still have hope, I still
11 have a dream, and it's this beliefs that have
12 always inspired me to fight for other immigrant
13 students, and the right to have better education
14 access, so that we all may become better
15 Americans. For - - Dreamers have been here many
16 years, love this country, and wish to contribute
17 and give back. But even with our hard work,
18 education and skill set, we need opportunities to
19 free ourselves from chains of being undocumented.
20 We need the New York Dream Act and Dream Fund to
21 make college and higher education affordable and
22 attainable to those who come to our great state,
23 so that one day they may come back and give back
24 to the communities that helped embrace them. This
25 State, this country, this nation, needs our

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2 talents, our skills and our resources, to continue
3 the greatness and richness of being an immigrant -
4 - melting pot. Likewise, the investment the State
5 of New York has already made, or will make to the
6 education of all undocumented youths for their K
7 through 12 education serves as a stimulus for the
8 passage of the New York Dream Act, which will
9 continue to harness the talents and skills, future
10 educational and employment opportunities for an
11 estimated 400,000 immigrant youth right here in
12 New York. It makes no economic sense to
13 continually shut the doors to a more highly
14 qualified and highly skilled workforce, especially
15 for such - - of immigrant youths who only want to
16 great things in life. As for me, I want to be a
17 great federal judge, even one that sits on the
18 Supreme Court bench many years from now. And my
19 first step towards that goal is going back to a
20 great law school, NYU Columbia. The passage of
21 the New York Dream bills would make my dreams
22 become close to reality. I want what everybody
23 else wants, a chance. A chance at the American
24 Dream and the belief that if you work hard enough,
25 you can succeed and become anything you want to

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2 be, especially here in the land of opportunity. I
3 have worked so hard in the last nine years as a
4 grocery stock boy, pizza man and florist, that
5 it's reminded me of this American model, and the
6 need to go back and do greater things. Working
7 all those minimum--hours at minimum wage does take
8 a toll, unfortunately, and the consequences for
9 friends and coworkers, "What are you doing here?
10 You went to college for this?" has become part of
11 the struggle, as well. [time bell] And the
12 realization that you may not have any more
13 opportunities, even in your 30s, to go back and
14 achieve your dreams, especially given the fact
15 that you're undocumented. But even with my
16 status, age and time, the truth is no matter how
17 old you are, you will always have your hopes and
18 dreams. Therefore, the New York Dream Act would
19 be my stepping stone opportunity of dreaming and
20 achieving bigger and better things. But without
21 private scholarships, financial aid and with
22 minimum wage earnings, going to law school may
23 just be, may not be affordable and realistic. I
24 just may have to brush aside my goals, once again
25 due to financial hardship. However, regardless of

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2 whatever comes my way, I will not give up. I will
3 continue to fight along the way, so that my dreams
4 and others will not die, for it is not just our
5 goals that we hope for, or our lives that we
6 struggle for, when we fight for a better, more
7 just and more hopeful tomorrow. Finally, for the
8 Council, I want to thank outside the box. I urge
9 all of you to look relative at the faces in the
10 room, to think of all the lives, hopes and dreams
11 that will be affected by such a bill, to look
12 beyond the numbers and past the two percent added
13 to the State Budget for the Dream Act or even the
14 higher taxes that we pay in the future. We talk
15 of immigration as an issue, but in reality it's
16 our lives, literally, honestly. There's been one
17 issue for me that's kept me late up night. And
18 it's the issue of suicide and depression amongst
19 undocumented youths. Basically, due to our
20 status, which causes our limitation and our
21 struggles, our lives are not the most glamorous.
22 And sadly within the last couple of years, there's
23 been a rash of suicides by undocumented youths. I
24 just hope that by passing legislation like the New
25 York Dream Act, and giving hope to those who need

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2 it most, we can help them make the right choices
3 in life. That's my ultimate goal. Because if we
4 give them hope and education, then I know we can
5 save many lives, as well. Thank you.

6 [applause]

7 ANN MARIE SCHRODER-GAIL: Good
8 afternoon, everyone. My name is Ann Marie
9 Schroder-Gail and I'm an immigrant from Jamaica,
10 West Indies. I am the current President of Medgar
11 Evers College Student Government Association,
12 Founder and Chair of Medgar Evers College United
13 Body of International and Undocumented Students
14 Club. This club was established as a support
15 system to assist foreign students in a successful
16 transition to campus life, as well as introduce
17 them to the many opportunities available in the
18 surrounding community. I am a senior majoring in
19 applied management, with a concentration in social
20 service administration. I am here articulating my
21 endorsement on behalf of the New York State Dream
22 Act legislation. Although many thousands of
23 undocumented students are given the opportunity to
24 pursue their educational aspirations, yet still
25 they cannot apply for State or federal financial

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2 aid, under current law. I strongly believe that
3 undocumented students who complete New York State
4 High School should be qualified to receive some
5 form of governmental monetary sustenance. This
6 monetary fuel will help finance these students in
7 the development of their educational requisites.
8 Today, I am calling upon our New York State
9 Legislature to pass, and I am appealing with
10 Governor Cuomo, to please sign the New York State
11 Dream Act which will grant certain benefits to
12 eligible, undocumented immigrants. This will,
13 will create countless benefits to New York, as we
14 are in need of a skilled workforce. I am also
15 summoning the New York State Legislature to pass
16 and Governor Cuomo to please sign legislation
17 establishing the New York Dream Fund Commission.
18 This Dream Fund will aid the advancement of the
19 educational opportunities of children of
20 immigrants through scholarship programs, for
21 higher education. I am very devoted and ardent to
22 the problems that affect international and
23 undocumented students. And I am eager to send a
24 clear message to Washington, D.C., that enough is
25 enough. I am content with actions that New York

1
2 State has taken to pass this bill, in order to
3 help students realize their dreams, through
4 quality educational opportunities that will
5 ultimately help them to, and ask themselves and
6 their family, while contributing to the
7 progression of our society. Thank you.

8 [applause]

9 ALDEN NESBITT: Thank you for
10 having me. My name is Alden Nesbitt, I am a
11 Member of The Black Institute, and Partner to The
12 Dream Coalition. In 2001, my mother, like many
13 other teachers that were recruited from the
14 Department of Education, there are--sorry. I'm
15 Alden Nesbitt, Member of The Black Institute,
16 Partner to the Dream Coalition. In 2001, my
17 mother, like many others, was recruited by the
18 Department of Education to teach in New York
19 City's public schools. They were promised
20 permanent residency and not just for the teachers,
21 but for the teachers and for their families, even
22 for their spouses, also. Eleven years later, the
23 Department did not give the teachers what they
24 promised. Eleven years later, the Department is
25 still beating around the bush and still, you know,

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2 in, inside, not saying, giving us what we, what
3 they promised eleven years ago. And because of
4 this, I am now 22 years old, and I am now aged out
5 from my visa, because I am no longer a dependent
6 of my mother. And this is also the case for
7 hundreds of others in my association. I was a
8 semester shy from getting my associate's degree in
9 Kingsborough Community College. I wanted to be a
10 criminal psychologist, I wanted to, you know, go
11 on, pursue bachelor's, master's degrees, even a
12 Ph.D. A lot of the people in my association,
13 because we came up here legally, because our
14 parents was recruited by the Department of
15 Education and we came up here legally, we had
16 papers to start off with, until we turned the age
17 of 21. Now, they gave us, well we basically,
18 because of the broken immigration laws, we had two
19 options: one option, which was to pursue a
20 student visa, which when you're on the student
21 visa, this increases your tuition even more. Even
22 more, if you're, if you're a immigrant. Which
23 doesn't make sense because a undocumented
24 immigrant can pay in-state tuition, but a
25 documented immigrant has to pay four times as

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2 much, sometimes. So, in my case, I applied for a
3 student visa, which was denied, because immig--
4 Department of Immigration said that it was two
5 days too late, so it was denied. So right now, I
6 am out of status, and I cannot go to school, I
7 cannot even get my associate's degree, and so it's
8 like this for hundreds of others in my
9 association. Now, because of this option of
10 picking between a student visa and becoming
11 undocumented [time bell] a lot of people in my
12 association, they, they pay, they have multiple
13 degrees, master's, bachelor's, multiple degrees
14 and nothing to do or show for it. Our parents was
15 brought here to provide a service to this country.
16 And a service to, to undocumented people with
17 papers, without papers, a service to citizens,
18 people who lived here their entire lives, because
19 they're teachers, and so for all the other
20 recruited workers, recruited here, from Department
21 of Labor. We support the Dream Act because if
22 these bills pass, it's a step forward in immig--in
23 the immigrant community. We want opportunities
24 and a chance for our dreams and help inspire
25 others. Make our dreams become a reality. Thank

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you.

[applause]

JANET YATES: Hi, my name is Janet Yates, and he's also in my Association, so it's pretty much the same thing. I'm not even going to read off the paper, because I've been living this for eleven years, so I know exactly what I'm going through. Basically, our parents and us, we came to this country legally. And our parents are teachers, which I think, you know, are one of the greatest careers you can ever have. You know, and the Department of Education did drop the ball. And because they dropped the ball, we became, we became out aged. And now we're including in the group, we're, we're undocumented. And we cannot work, we cannot support ourselves. And we're dependent on our parents for everything. I am 28 years old. And I've been going to CUNY school for almost ten years now, because I don't carry any loans. So whenever I have the money, I go to school; and when I don't, I just don't go to school. This, this thing, humanity is not defined by a piece of paper. We aren't defined by race, we can, all of us can breathe, all of us can feel.

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2 And it's just a matter of simply civil liberties
3 that all of us, given the choice, that we can go
4 to school, just like everybody else. And that's
5 what we're asking for you to pass the Act, so that
6 everyone has a fair opportunity. We're not asking
7 for a handout, this is something that we've been
8 here for years, I've been here for eleven years.
9 I grew up in this country, basically, this is my
10 home. I don't have anything to go back for. So
11 I'm just asking you to find it in your hearts,
12 just to give us an opportunity, we're we can
13 finish our education. 'Cause I want to, I want to
14 be a lawyer. I want to do public interest law,
15 and I tell other people in the public interest
16 law, they want to do corporate law. I want to
17 help people because I've lived this life so long
18 that I, I know the stories. And I want to applaud
19 everyone who's been here who came here, you know,
20 who had the courage to come here and tell their
21 stories, because we are living in the shadows. We
22 are afraid to be arrested, we are afraid to talk
23 about this issue over and over again. We are, we
24 do have peers who have moved on to have master's
25 degree, to have Ph.D.s, and what do we have? I

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2 have peers who are finish their Ph.D.'s and still,
3 Ph.D.s, and I'm still doing my bachelor's. Not
4 because I'm not, you know, intellectually to do
5 it, it's because I just cannot. So, I think the
6 baseline here for everyone is just give us an
7 opportunity to prove you right, that we can be a
8 productive member of the society because we are
9 not a part of this society if we are not afforded
10 the same rights. So, I'm asking you here just to
11 pass the Dream Act and just give us a chance. We
12 are all here, we are all humans, we are all in the
13 same line. And I'm just, that's all I have to
14 say, thank you. And my name is Janet.

15 [applause]

16 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you. And
17 I'd like to say I'm very aware of the Caribbean
18 Teachers Association situation, because I was a
19 teacher in those years when they recruited people
20 to come to this country. And I want to make that
21 point very, very clear and on the record. They
22 came to you to ask--

23 JANET YATES: Yes, sir.

24 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: --well, your
25 parents--

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JANET YATES: Yes.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: --to ask them to come to this country to do a service to this country--

JANET YATES: Yes.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: --and now, the Department of Education is renegeing on that promise, not only to the teachers who came but then now to the children who have grown up.

JANET YATES: Yes, sir.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: And this a disgraceful situation that the Department of Education has gotten itself into. And it really must be corrected immediately.

JANET YATES: Yes.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: It's just, it's--not, when you've worked for the Department of Education for many years, I almost get it with them. [laughs] You know? But we can't allow it to, to continue to happen. You know? And I just want to thank you for coming and giving that testimony. Thank you very much.

ALDEN NESBITT: Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON RODRIGUEZ: And our

2 last panel is going to be Yahida Savedra
3 [phonetic]; Carla Rosaro [phonetic]; Ashel Bravo,
4 Bray [phonetic]; Russell - - Lum [phonetic]; and
5 Aisha Maldonado? No. Mamora [phonetic].

6 [background comments, conversation]

7 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Yeah, why don't
8 you come up, we'll take care of it, and come on
9 up.

10 [pause, background noise]

11 CHAIRPERSON RODRIGUEZ: Erin, sorry
12 for--

13 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Yeah, we're
14 sorry.

15 ERIN: I didn't know, no, I didn't
16 know, no one told me I had to sign it.

17 CHAIRPERSON RODRIGUEZ: But I say
18 we're sorry ,we didn't know.

19 ERIN: Okay, that's fine, no
20 problem.

21 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Okay, so let's
22 get started.

23 [background comments]

24 YAHIDA SAVEDRA: My name is Yahida
25 Savedra, and I am 23 years old. In a year I will

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2 graduate with a double major in marketing and
3 aviation. As a member of Dream Scholars, a
4 grassroots group founded by undocumented immi--
5 students and allies, I strongly support the New
6 York State Dream Act and the New York State Dream
7 Fund. These proposal will give undocumented
8 students like myself an opportunity to provide for
9 private scholarships and the tuition assistance
10 program. I am dreaming in a pragmatic way. I
11 wake up at 4:00 a.m. every morning, and go to work
12 before heading to class. Although I file my taxes
13 every year, I am unable to apply for TAP, because
14 I am considered, I'm not considered a permanent
15 resident of New York State. I came to the United
16 States at the age of four, and ever since then I
17 have resided here, for nearly 20 years. This is
18 my home, and I plan to stay permanently here. I
19 love New York. I know how magical it is, not only
20 because it's, of its fast moving train system,
21 luminous advertisement, but also by how Fort Tryon
22 transforms itself every autumn into the medieval
23 times, and yes, there are unicorns and princes
24 there. [laughs] There is no City as egalitarian
25 as New York. The Statue of Liberty constantly

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2 reminds us of our origins. It reminds us of all
3 the struggles immigrants face in order to build
4 this country, and how it is up to us to improve
5 within every generation. The New York State Dream
6 Fund and the Dream Act will fulfill this
7 egalitarian promise to all of its students. I
8 urge Governor Cuomo to support the New York State
9 Dream legislation. Thank you.

10 [applause]

11 AISHA MAMORA: Hi, my name is Aisha
12 Mamora, and I'm the Membership Organizer at DRUM,
13 Desis Rising Up and Moving. We're located in
14 Jackson Heights in Queens, and Council Member
15 Daniel Dromm is our representative and longtime
16 supporter. So we are a grassroots community based
17 organization with a membership of over 1,400 South
18 Asian immigration workers, but also youth
19 students. Over 65,000 undocumented students
20 graduate from New York City public high schools
21 nationally, and there are over one million
22 undocumented immigrants in New York City. Of
23 that, 22 percent are Latinos and 20--I'm sorry, 24
24 percent are Latinos and 22 percent are South
25 Asians, making us the two largest undocumented

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2 population in the City. I am here today on behalf
3 of our membership in support of the New York State
4 Dream Act, which will provide financial,
5 educational resources for undocumented students
6 who have come here under the age of 16, and have
7 lived in the City for over two years. For most
8 undocumented immigrant families earning less than
9 minimum wage, being able to provide their child
10 with a college education is but a mere dream and
11 not reality. Many immigrant youth cannot enroll
12 in college because they have to work low wage
13 jobs, and are facing rising college tuition prices
14 even within the CUNY system. Many other students
15 can enroll in college but struggle to stay in
16 college and some tend to drop out due to work.
17 The New York State, the New York State Dream Act
18 would provide low income immigrants with financial
19 resources and means to attend college, and also
20 private universities. We further appreciate the
21 New York State Dream Act because it would lessen
22 the pressure for immigrant students to join the
23 military under the proposed federal dram act. It
24 is unfair for young people to be pushed into a
25 decision to join the military because it is the

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2 only way they can maintain an immigration status
3 here in New York City, especially for many poor
4 youth who cannot afford college. We want to make
5 sure that the New York State Dream Act does not
6 include the good moral character clause.

7 Currently, the Assembly bill mentions the good
8 moral character clause in the description of the
9 bill, but not in the actual text, the way the
10 federal Dream Act includes. In New York City
11 public schools, as many of the Council Members
12 here may know, youth are being criminalized day-
13 to-day because of zero tolerance policies towards
14 discipline, because of the increase in student
15 safety agents, because of metal detectors, because
16 of scanners, because of stop-and-frisk policies in
17 the streets of New York City. So we hope these
18 policies do not affect and end up excluding
19 immigrant youth from being able to access higher
20 level of education. Poor youth of color need to
21 stop being disproportionately arrested and the New
22 York State Dream Act supporters should not further
23 punish the most vulnerable youth. [time bell] We
24 urge the New York City Council to pass the
25 resolution so that all youth can benefit and serve

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2 this society. Help us with Dream so that all
3 young people in our communities can help further
4 their education. Thank you.

5 LIONEL BROWER: Hello, my--good
6 evening. My name is Lionel Brower, I am a Youth
7 Organizer and a member of Vamos Unidos, street
8 vendors mobilizing and organizing in solidarity.
9 Well, we are a grassroot community based
10 organization of over 600 working class Latina and
11 Latino street vendors in The Bronx, Brooklyn and
12 Queens. We built he leadership of adult and youth
13 street vendors in New York City across the--I am
14 here on behalf of the Latinas and Latinos of the
15 Vamos Unidos Youth Group. We support the New York
16 State Dream Act, but want to ensure that it
17 doesn't include a good moral character clause.
18 Currently, the bill's description mentions good
19 moral character, but does not in--but not in the
20 bill itself. In our communities, many of our
21 youth help to provide for their families
22 financially by vending on the streets with their
23 parents. We have gotten numerous reports from our
24 base that high fine tickets and summons which are
25 considered misdemeanors are being given to our

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2 adult workers and our youth. Not only does this
3 occur on the streets, but also youth are being
4 criminalized day-to-day in their schools by
5 walking through metal detectors, being scanned,
6 arrested and charged without reason. In today's
7 society, the reality is that low income youth of
8 color are always targeted in their schools and
9 communities. We want to be sure that the New York
10 State Dream Act does not repeat the same mistake
11 as the federal Dream Act, and that ends, that ends
12 up excluding immigrants youth from access to
13 education. With that in mind, I am here to urge
14 New York City Council to support the New York
15 State Dream Act and provide access to financial
16 educational resource for all immigrant, immigrant
17 youth. Thank you.

18 [applause]

19 RUSSELL LUM: Hi, my name's Russell
20 Lum, I'm the Justice and Peace Representative of
21 the Little Sisters of the Assumption. I work in
22 the New York State Dream Coalition, and
23 particularly its Faith Committee. So I'm here to
24 talk about supporting the resolutions from a faith
25 perspective. My friends in the Faith Committee

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2 understand that faith leaders and vowed religious,
3 and the people who work for or with them, are in a
4 position in this society to communicate the moral
5 messages in policy advocacy. The moral message is
6 from spiritual groundings. And that's an easy
7 story with the New York State Dream legislation.
8 I am in the employ of the Little Sisters of the
9 Assumption, a congregation of Catholic Sisters who
10 works with immigrant populations in New York and
11 the Northeast generally. And we improve people's
12 lives on local and personal levels. I do their
13 political advocacy so I try to make it that we
14 improve people's lives on structural levels, too.
15 And we think that this is a clear moral call, with
16 multi-faith agreement and momentum. We think that
17 New York State Dream legislation, as so many
18 people have said, is an equality issue, and that
19 as many human legal structures as we can get
20 people power behind, should be treating people
21 equally. The reason for that is that we're all
22 equal in God's eyes. Yeah, we're all children of
23 God, and to bear that truth out in our society
24 would mean that the human legal structures that
25 divide us along the lines of how we got to New

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2 York, assigning legitimacy to some of the ways
3 that some of us got to New York, and, and
4 demonizing and victimizing some of the other ways
5 that some of us got to New York. That those be
6 rejected and rewritten. God is infinitely bigger
7 than our borders and our legal statuses. An a lot
8 of people know that. A lot of people know that,
9 but maybe what they don't clue in to is that
10 that's a call. It's a call to go in that
11 direction. We can't quite be infinitely bigger
12 than legal statuses, but we could be rather bigger
13 than we are. A lack of response to the needs of
14 undocumented youth, as would be attended to by the
15 New York State Dream legislation, would be a
16 serious injustice. The Little Sisters whom I work
17 for believe in a God of justice. The Sisters I
18 work for have a God who says in Leviticus, "When
19 an alien resides with you in your land, do not
20 mistreat such a one. You shall treat the alien
21 who resides with you no differently than the
22 natives born among you. You shall love the alien
23 as yourself." Thank you.

24 [applause] [time bell]

25 MAY LEE: Good evening, my name is

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2 May Lee, I'm the Executive Director of the Chinese
3 Progressive Association. I would really like to
4 thank Council Members Dromm and Rodriguez for
5 their leadership in organizing the City Council to
6 have this resolution. And also, in speaking out
7 in many different areas and arenas about the Dream
8 Act. The Chinese Progressive Association is in
9 Lower Manhattan and Chinatown, Lower East Side.
10 We're located right on the eastern end of Canal
11 Street, in between, right at the border between
12 Chinatown and Lower East Side. We serve those who
13 live in, or work, in that neighborhood. We teach
14 English to new immigrants, we help parents
15 navigate the public school system, become more
16 involved in their child's education, and we also
17 build the leadership skills of young people. So,
18 our organization supports this because education
19 is very important, as have, you have probably
20 heard, to the Chinese community. If you ask any
21 immigrant parent why they came to this country,
22 they might tell you, "Oh, I came here to find a
23 better job." But the bottom line is that they
24 came here so their kids could have a better
25 education. They took up, you know, roots they've

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2 already established themselves in their own home
3 countries and their own communities, but they
4 pulled up the roots to come here and it is really
5 for their child's education. So, we believe that
6 all immigrants regardless of the circumstances
7 under which they came here, deserve a chance at a
8 better future. We've been doing more, you know,
9 workshops and education about the Dream Act, and
10 we've met young people in our community who
11 through no fault of their own, or even through no
12 fault of their own family, are somehow now out of
13 status. We have an intern working with us, who is
14 one of the fellowship winners of the Fund for
15 Public Advocates, you know, Dream Fellowship. And
16 you know, here's someone who is bright and
17 talented, he went to high school here, he's going
18 to college here, he volunteers in the community,
19 and he's going to be a community leader. So we
20 need him here. And he, a person like him should
21 not, should be given every opportunity to go to
22 college and beyond and really excel. You know,
23 the first Chinese immigrants came to this country
24 in the late 1800s during a period of very
25 restrictive immigration laws, sometimes without

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2 the benefit of any proper papers. So their
3 stories have been documented in books and plays,
4 recounting their experiences. So many of the
5 Chinese-American community leaders and residents
6 that you see here today, are actually the
7 descendants of those immigrants, who are the
8 dreamers of yesterday. So, we're asking, you
9 know, the City Council, to, you know, do all you
10 can to urge the State Legislature to support our
11 dreamers of today, and pass the Dream Fund and the
12 Dream Act. [applause] Thank you.

13 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you very
14 much, I just want to mention that DRUM and Vamos
15 Unidos are from my district, and we showed no
16 prejudice today in putting you in the first panel.
17 [laughter] And we have to make that up to you at
18 some point, though. And we, this is our last
19 panel, and I do thank you all for waiting and for
20 being with us. Unless there is somebody else who
21 wants to speak, I don't want to make that mistake
22 again, of not having notified people that they
23 need to sign in a form, to hand in a form in order
24 to speak. But just to also say to Aisha, the
25 Daily News today carried a story, I don't know if

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2 you saw it, about stop-and-frisks. And guess
3 which neighborhood had the third highest number of
4 stop-and-frisks in the City?

5 AISHA MAMORA: Jackson Heights.

6 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Jackson
7 Heights, 17,000 stop-and-frisks in our
8 neighborhood, a community of immigrants with low
9 crime. And one has to wonder what that's all
10 about. So, I really deeply appreciate your
11 testimony and bringing that issue to, to our
12 attention as well, in context with the, with the
13 Dream Act, as well. So, that being said, unless
14 there's anybody else who wants to speak? Oh, I
15 want to make, mention that we had additional
16 testimony today for the record from Service
17 Employees International Union, Local 32 BJ.
18 That's it? And that's it. The meeting--Oh,
19 Council Member Rodriguez.

20 CHAIRPERSON RODRIGUEZ: - -

21 closing, I wanted to say thank you to the staff,
22 and especially to Barbara, that today's her last
23 hearing. So, now she's going to be having a lot
24 of pleasure time to enjoy her family, and we just
25 wanted to say congratulations and thank you for

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your contribution to this Committee.

BARBARA: Thank you.

[applause]

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: And let me say thank you to Juleen [phonetic] and Jennifer and Tanya, for the hard work that you have done, in this Committee. It was an awful lot of preparation to make this happen today. And this is probably a marathon hearing, if we--yes, if I may say so. And Barbara, too, did we thank Barbara? Yes. I thought you did, okay.

[laughter] And cheers Matthews and everybody else who made this, 'cause we've been going since like 11:30 this morning with the press conference and this, and--but it's an extremely, extremely important issue. And the more we speak about it, and I think somebody said before, coming out about it and opening up and telling people our stories, the harder it is to deny or to discrim--or to discriminate against those who have had these experiences. So, that's why having this hearing, I think especially today, with what our hopes are for happening in Albany this week, and if possible by the end of the week, in Albany, we get this

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done. Where there's a will, there's a way.

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[applause] Want to close--? This meeting is

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adjourned.

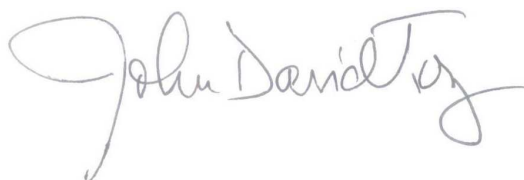
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[gavel]

C E R T I F I C A T E

I, JOHN DAVID TONG certify that the foregoing transcript is a true and accurate record of the proceedings. I further certify that I am not related to any of the parties to this action by blood or marriage, and that I am in no way interested in the outcome of this matter.

Signature

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "John David Tong". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned to the right of the printed word "Signature".

Date April 13, 2012