

# MAIN STREET LEGAL SERVICES, INC.

**BATTERED WOMEN'S  
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Maria Arias  
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**ELDER LAW CLINIC**  
Joseph Rosenberg  
Robert F. Seibel

**CLINIC ADMINISTRATOR**  
Dorothy Matthew

**CUNY SCHOOL OF LAW**  
65-21 MAIN STREET  
FLUSHING, NY 11367

EMAIL: [mssl@mail.law.cuny.edu](mailto:mssl@mail.law.cuny.edu)

TEL: (718) 340-4300  
FAX: (718) 340-4478

**IMMIGRANT & REFUGEE  
RIGHTS CLINIC**  
Sameer Ashar  
Alizabeth Newman  
Manny Vargas  
Liliana Yanez

**INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S  
HUMAN RIGHTS CLINIC**  
Rhonda Copelon  
Andrew Fields

**MEDIATION CLINIC**  
Beryl Blaustone  
Cheryl Howard

**WORKFARE ADVOCACY  
PROJECT**  
Degna Levister  
Stephen Loffredo

October 24, 2007

## Hearing Testimony on the Development, Relief, and Education for Alien Minors (DREAM) Act of 2007.

Good Afternoon, City Council Members. My name is Mirna Solis and I am a third year law student at CUNY Law School. I am here as a student on behalf of the City University of New York. As you may know, every year the aspirations of thousands of young New Yorkers are destroyed by immigration laws.

These young New Yorkers call this country and this city home. They were brought here as children and not through actions of their own free will. Yet, like many New York children they pledge their allegiance to our country, they've learn to speak flawless English, they respect the values of the constitution and despite not having a piece of paper that says so, they must be viewed as Americanized.

All students are taught the ideals that make our country and New York City great; they could grow up to be anything they wanted to be- doctors, engineers, and lawyers and they were led to believe in the promise of CUNY, that New Yorkers could receive educational opportunities regardless of their background. Yet, every year many undocumented students have to abandon their aspirations due to the glass ceiling that prevents them from advancing. They've

dreamt, only to be prevented by the insurmountable hurdles created by immigration law, thereby making it nearly impossible for their dreams to become reality. Though undocumented students may be legally permitted to attend college, they have no access to student loans, and realistically, few can afford to pay the expense of higher education out of their own pockets. Even those who decide to work full time and go to school, have the odds stacked heavily against them.

These struggling undocumented youth have called New York home for years and they've earned their right to be here and should be treated as any other New Yorker who wishes to pursue higher education. By not making higher education available to every young person in New York, our society is creating a permanent subclass group of individuals, who find it impossible reach beyond a high school education.

We know the economic and social benefits that a higher education confers on society, but aside from attainment of such benefits, we must legalize undocumented youth because it is the right thing to do; we have a moral obligation to grant them legal recognition. As New Yorkers we cannot turn our backs on these young people. They are indistinguishable from myself and from other American youth. Although I was born in Los Angeles, I was born into an undocumented family, yet American values instilled in me the idea that I could grow up to be anything I wanted to. I come before you several months from receiving my Juris Doctorate. But unfortunately my undocumented school peers, who are just as American as I am, have had greater hurdles and have not been able to achieve equally. Without access to federal student loans my undocumented friends find it impossible to go to college, much less graduate school.

Since 2001, my undocumented friends have been caught in the middle of fierce immigration debates. They cannot wait any longer. A few weeks ago Immigration and Customs Enforcement targeted alleged gang affiliated individuals on Long Island. Although they found

few, in the process they arrested almost 200 young men, many innocent youth who could have benefited from the DREAM Act. Instead, they now face deportation. Which community will be next? As a consequence of the current anti-immigrant climate, CUNY law school has received countless phone calls from community members as well as undocumented CUNY students concerned about their future. By the time this session of Congress ends Immigration and Customs Enforcement will have forced some undocumented CUNY students to leave their school and the country they call home in the midst of pursuing their dreams. These CUNY students are innocent of any wrongdoing, yet they are being punished for actions over which they had no control. Such an injustice was best described by Justice Brennan in the landmark case, *Plyer v. Doe*, "...condemnation on the head of an infant is illogical and unjust. Obviously, no child is responsible for his birth and penalizing the child is an ineffectual--as well as unjust--way of deterring the parent...."

*Plyer v. Doe* found that undocumented children had a constitutional right to an education. More than twenty year after *Plyer*, New York and our country revisits the right of youths to be educated and to be fully integrated into our society.

It is with urgency that the City of New York and its representatives must actively and aggressively advocate for the expedited passage of the DREAM Act so that CUNY's motto of providing opportunities for all who strive for advancement, is not just reality for some and an illusive promise for others.

**Testimony by Ms. Linda Alexander-Wallace,  
Director of Counseling Services, Hostos Community College,  
City University of New York  
Before  
The New York City Council  
Committee on Higher Education  
and  
Committee on Immigration  
Wednesday, October 24, 2007**

Chairman Barron, Chairman Stewart, and members of the New York City Council Higher Education and Immigration Committees, I bring greetings from the Bronx and the Hostos Community College family, particularly our international students. My name is Linda Alexander Wallace, and I am the Director of Counseling Services.

I thank you on behalf of my College for the opportunity to testify on the positive impact the DREAM Act would have on Hostos students and their community. I would like to share with you a snapshot of our College community, some obstacles faced by Hostos students, our efforts to counteract these challenges, and the potential impact of the DREAM Act.

We know that higher education has historically been the path immigrants have used to attain upward mobility. In New York City, the CUNY system has stood as a beacon of access to this dream. Established in April, 1968, Hostos Community College continues this proud tradition, currently enrolling the highest number of foreign born students in all CUNY community colleges.

Selected statistics for Entering Freshman Undergraduates at Hostos Community College for Fall 2006 indicate that over half (53.6%) of our students were born outside the United States compared to 44.4% for all CUNY community colleges. At Hostos, 54.5% of our entering freshmen speak a language other than English as their primary language compared with 49.2% at other community colleges.

Approximately 6% of Hostos' current student population is undocumented. These students and their families daily experience the multiple stressors associated with their undocumented status. In addition to the effects of minority status, these families may also share specific ethnic group experiences (political, economic, trauma and immigration history), poverty, and illegal status. Current restrictive legislation and policy limit access to health care, and other basic human services to undocumented immigrants and their families.

In the CUNY tradition, the Hostos community boasts a proud history of advocacy and support of the immigrant student's access to higher education. Our activities include:

- Lobbying in Albany on behalf of the rights of immigrant students.
- Workshops on citizenship and immigration through the Department of Public Administration.
- The full-time operation of the CUNY Immigration Center.
- The Hostos Student Leadership Academy offers opportunities to enhance understanding of, and to participate in, governance, civic and legislative issues, and provides access to the student network of support and opportunities.
- Emergency funds to assist immigrants with tuition costs provided by the SGA.

- Information on academic scholarships is available to international students through the Dean of Students' office and the Hostos Honor Society, (Phi Theta Kappa).
- Targeted workshops dealing with stress and coping.
- Individual counseling to address issues such as trauma, isolation, depression, etc.
- Referrals to culturally sensitive human service providers.
- Awareness campaign of the effects of the Ability to Benefit mandate.

Hostos Community College has committed to actively engage our immigrant population with a welcoming and supportive environment. The DREAM Act is a natural extension of the many supportive programs and activities that we now provide to the immigrant student at Hostos.

The DREAM Act would have far reaching positive effects. It would apply directly to the approximately three hundred Hostos students who now have minimal resources and limited opportunities, providing them with access to necessary funds to complete college. The DREAM Act would effectively help stabilize the family and immigrant communities these students depend on. Students who, in spite of impossible odds, not only aspire to higher education, but many persist and graduate, a testimony to their strength and resilience. The DREAM Act will allow our society to fully enjoy the application of the talents these students possess by engaging them completely as full and equal members. Hostos actively supports the success of these students and the families and communities they represent, and will continue to employ its resources to strengthen and provide opportunities for them.

**Testimony by Allan Wernick**  
**Director, CUNY Citizenship and Immigration Project**

**before**

**The New York City Council**  
**Committee on Higher Education**  
**and**  
**Committee on Immigration**

**Wednesday, October 24, 2007**

Good afternoon. Chairman Barron, Chairman Stewart and members of the New York City Council Higher Education and Immigration Committees. My name is Allan Wernick and I am the Director of the CUNY Citizenship and Immigration Project.

I appreciate the opportunity to testify on behalf of the City University of New York on the impact the passage of the DREAM Act will have on our institution and its students. Before addressing that topic, I would like to thank Chairmen Barron and Stewart and other members of the committees for their staunch support for immigrants' rights and for the support provided over recent years to the CUNY Citizenship and Immigration Project. Because of your efforts, we now provide services at twelve locations throughout New York City. Six of these centers are open full time. Six more are part-time operations. At all locations, attorneys and paralegals provide free immigration law application assistance and counseling.

As you are aware, the DREAM Act would provide first temporary, then permanent residence to tens of thousands of young New Yorkers. CUNY Chancellor Matthew Goldstein has on three

occasions written to Congress expressing his support for the principles inherent in this important legislation. Most recently he wrote to Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid that:

*“Our experience at the City University of New York teaches us that our undocumented students are among those with the greatest potential to play leading roles in scholarship, public service and economic leadership. . . . As the demand for talented college-trained workers increases, we need these students as full participants in our society.”*

For many of these worthy students, the DREAM Act represents their only opportunity for achieving legal status. Because of the restrictions on lawful immigration imposed by the Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act of 1996 (IIRIRA), these students have little opportunity to achieve legal status. For many, the DREAM Act is their only hope.

If the DREAM Act bill under consideration in the U.S. Senate were to become law, we estimate that approximately 3000 current CUNY students will qualify for temporary residence. Another 12,000 New Yorkers will become immediately eligible as well. Fifty thousand New Yorkers will likely qualify for DREAM Act benefits in the subsequent five years. Given the law’s imperative that its beneficiaries either attend college for two years or serve in the military for two years, we anticipate a substantial number of new enrollments from the DREAM Act temporary residents.

We will of course be recruiting and welcoming DREAM Act beneficiaries into CUNY. Our recruitment and admissions apparatus is well equipped to handle this effort. More challenging will be the need to provide legal assistance to the thousands of CUNY students and other New Yorkers seeking DREAM Act legal status. I can assure you that CUNY is committed to meeting



this challenge. We have the infrastructure and legal expertise to respond to what will be a tremendous need for legal services. Further, we are committed to finding the resources, in coordination with not-for-profit agencies throughout New York City, to provide free DREAM Act application assistance to all those who qualify. Our NYC/CUNY Citizenship Corps provides one model for accomplishing this task. The Corps consists of more than 400 volunteer attorneys, paralegals and community activists trained to provide free citizenship application assistance at sites throughout New York City. Working under the supervision of attorneys from the Citizenship and Immigration Project, these volunteers have assisted thousands of New Yorkers in applying for citizenship. I anticipate that we will implement a similar program to help DREAM Act applicants. In addition, our training structure, which now includes comprehensive immigration law training at CUNY's School of Professional Studies and the capability for online training, will allow CUNY to play a leading role in educating community activists on how to best assist DREAM Act applicants.

I am proud to say that no college or university in the nation provides immigration law services at a level close to what we provide at CUNY. Under the leadership of Chancellor Goldstein and Senior Vice Chancellor and Secretary to the Board of Trustees Jay Hershenson, the CUNY Citizenship and Immigration Project continues CUNY's tradition of welcoming immigrants and serving New York's immigrant communities.

I would be pleased to answer any questions you may have at this time.

Testimony of the Professional Staff Congress to  
The Higher Education Committee of  
New York City Council

October 24, 2007

By Arthurine DeSola,  
PSC Secretary

Good afternoon Chairman Barron and distinguished members of the Higher Education Committee. I wish to thank you for the opportunity to testify on behalf of the Professional Staff Congress in support of the City Council Resolution No. 1087. The resolution calls on the United States Congress to pass the Development, Relief and Education for Alien Minors Act of 2007 – or DREAM Act – and I am especially happy to be here today with students, fellow faculty and immigrant rights organizations to urge its passage.

My union represents 20,000 CUNY faculty and professional staff who know first-hand the particular hurdles facing undocumented students struggling to complete their education and find employment. Several years ago, New York State passed a law granting undocumented minors, who are brought to the US by their parents as children and graduate from a high school in New York State, the right to attend CUNY and pay in-state tuition. This forward-thinking legislation, which our union strongly advocated, has opened the door to a college education for thousands of talented young people since 2001. Today, more than a third of the entire CUNY student body comes from other countries. While this figure includes students on temporary visas, many are immigrant young people, who have lived in the city for years and will contribute enormously to the city's economy as professionals and skilled workers if given the chance.

However, without passage of the DREAM Act or broader comprehensive immigration reform, these young people have no means to qualify for permanent legal residency and obtain a green card to work legally. Thus, despite their talent, perseverance and desire to build a better life for themselves, their families and the broader community, they are stuck in limbo with no path forward. The DREAM Act would rectify this injustice by granting conditional residence status for 6 years to students who were brought to the US before age 15 and graduate high school. If they then earn a 2-year college degree or serve at least 2 years in the US military, they would be able to apply for regular permanent resident status.

As a counselor at Queensborough Community College for many years and now an elected officer of the PSC, I witnessed immigrant students' efforts to complete college on many different levels. They are hungry for a college education, but like most CUNY students, they also come from families of very modest means. Many worked full-time and frequently took time off from school to earn enough money to pay for the next semester's tuition and fees. However, unlike CUNY students born in the United States,

immigrant young people are not eligible for either federal Pell Grants or TAP assistance.<sup>1</sup> The DREAM Act would unlock this door as well.

It is estimated that 65,000 undocumented students graduate high schools in the United States every year, but only 5% ever attend college. This is a terrible waste. We commend the Council Members for introducing Resolution 1087 and urge its swift passage by the entire Council to send a message to the Congress. We of the Professional Staff Congress recommit ourselves to push the US Congress to pass the DREAM Act into law. Thank you.

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<sup>1</sup> These students may be eligible for modest support through the College Discovery or Vallone Scholarship programs, but these are extremely small programs and do not meet the needs for the majority of students.

**COVENANT HOUSE**  **NEW YORK**  
460 WEST 41<sup>ST</sup> STREET, NEW YORK, N.Y. 10036 • (212) 613-0300

**Testimony of Elizabeth Garcia, Director of Advocacy**  
**before**  
**The New York City Council**  
**Immigration and Higher Education Committees**  
*(October 24, 2007)*

I would like to thank the New York City Council and the members of the Immigration and Higher Education Committees for providing me with the opportunity to testify here today. My name is Elizabeth Garcia. I am the Director of Advocacy for Covenant House New York.

For nearly 35 years, Covenant House New York has been serving homeless, runaway and at-risk youth. We are the nation's largest, privately funded, non-profit adolescent care agency serving this population. Last year, Covenant House New York served over 7,000 young people, primarily between the ages of 16 and 21, in our residential and community -based programs, and through our street outreach efforts.

Many of the youth who find themselves in homeless situations are undocumented immigrants. Most have lived in the United States since they were small children. They were brought to the U.S. by parents or caretakers seeking to escape repressive governments and oppressive poverty. They did not choose to come to the U.S. or to be unlawfully present here. Nevertheless they find themselves faced with laws and penalties intended to punish unlawful behavior. They live in constant fear of deportation.

Under current U.S. Immigration laws, there are very few options available for undocumented youth to adjust their status and become legal residents. Most of the undocumented youth are unable to pursue higher education and all are unable to legally obtain

work, thus placing them at greater risk of living in poverty and becoming chronically homeless as adults.

Educational assistance, vocational training and job placement are three critical components of Covenant House New York services that aid our youth in rising up out of poverty and achieving independence. Unfortunately, for our undocumented youth, there is little we can do to assist them in obtaining a higher level of education and even less that we can do to help them obtain lawful employment. Let me provide you with a:

### **CASE EXAMPLE**

Sabrina was brought to the U.S. from Haiti by her father when she was only four years old. She grew up in New York City and excelled in school through elementary, middle, and high schools. When Sabrina was only 14 years old, her father abandoned her. She spent the next three years of her life bouncing from one family friend's home to another. Finally, when she was 17, her high school guidance counselor referred her to Covenant House New York.

At Covenant House, Sabrina was quickly accepted into Rights of Passage, a transitional living program that emphasizes self sufficiency through employment and education. Sabrina was able to finish high school at the top of her class while living in Covenant House, but then began the difficulty of finding a job and furthering her education. Sabrina enrolled in each of Covenant House's paid vocational training programs, as stipends were available for immigrant youth, but was unable to get a regular job outside of Covenant House. In addition, her true dream was to go to school and receive a Political Science degree, yet was unable to afford the tuition.

Sabrina was a model client, ambitious, intelligent, well spoken, articulate, respectful, but it seemed that her options were very limited. She could not return to her native country of Haiti,

since she was no longer able to speak the language, had no family, and little connection to what seemed a foreign place. Yet she had no way of pursuing and fulfilling her full potential in the only country she knew as her own.

### **DREAM ACT**

The Development, Relief, and Education for Alien Minors Act, also known as the DREAM Act (S. 774), provides a remedy to the situation faced by many undocumented youth. This bill, which enjoys bi-partisan support, seeks to regularize the status of young people who:

1. came to the U.S. before the age of 16;
2. have been continuously in the country for 5 years or longer;
3. have a high school diploma or its equivalent (i.e. GED); and
4. have demonstrated good moral character.

The Act would extend a 6 year conditional legal status to undocumented youth who meet these criteria. During the 6 year period, the youth would be required to graduate from a 2 year college, complete at least 2 years of a 4 year degree, or serve at least 2 years in the U.S. military. At the end of the 6 year period, Permanent Resident status would be granted to youth who meet these requirements and have maintained good moral character.

The DREAM Act would provide a measure of fairness & equity to youth who through no choice of their own find themselves in undocumented status. It would also provide many benefits to the U.S. by:

### **REDUCING HIGH SCHOOL DROPOUT RATES**

The children of undocumented immigrants are far more likely to drop out of high school than are students who were born in the U.S. Currently, only 40% of undocumented, Hispanic males graduate from High School according to the Migration Policy Institute. The DREAM Act

provides a strong incentive to stay in school, since the tuition and citizenship benefits of the Act would only be available to high school graduates.

### **IMPROVING ACCESS TO COLLEGE**

It is estimated that only 5 -10% of undocumented youth who graduate from high school go on to attend college, as compared with about 75% of their classmates (National Immigration Law Center). Current federal law discourages states from providing in-state tuition to undocumented immigrant students. There are only 10 states that provide in-state tuition for all residents regardless of their immigration status. The DREAM Act would eliminate a federal provision that discourages states from providing in-state tuition to undocumented immigrant student residents. This would significantly improve access to college for many bright, hardworking and talented youth who could otherwise not afford to attend college.

### **INCREASING EDUCATED WORKFORCE**

Over 80% of the nearly 25 million jobs that will be created in the next 10 years will require postsecondary education (ACE, 2004). Based on current enrollment figures at postsecondary institutions, we will be far short of meeting this need. By providing a clear, legal path to higher education, citizenship and employment for our undocumented youth, we can make a significant, positive impact on our future workforce. A more educated workforce will lead to higher wages, and lower crime and poverty rates.

Undocumented youth who were brought to this country by their parents at very young ages, who did not have a choice about their unlawful entry, and who have grown up in this country as Americans deserve the right to prosper in this country through education and employment. They should not be penalized for the decisions their parents made. We ask that the New York City Council support the passage of the DREAM Act. Thank you!

Joe Taranto  
Undergraduate Student, New York University  
Member, New York State Youth Leadership Council

October 24, 2007

Good afternoon, members of the Council.

My name is Joe Taranto. I am a Staten Island resident, an undergraduate student at New York University, and a proud supporter of the DREAM Act.

My grandmother came to the United States from Sicily with her mother when she was 13 years old. I learned most of what I know about American values from my grandmother, who taught me about the promise of success in exchange for hard work, dedication, sacrifice and perseverance.

I grew up absolutely certain that by studying hard and making the right decisions, I would one day find success. But this is simply not the case for hundreds of thousands of young people in the U.S. today. Each year, approximately 65,000 bright and promising undocumented students graduate high school with fewer options and uncertain futures.

This statistic is so much more than a number. These are people. They are some of my closest friends. They are graduates of the City University of New York. They are politics and business majors, community organizers, future teachers and engineers. And they're waiting for Congress and the President to pass a piece of legislation that will enable them to put their hard-earned college degrees to work, and that legislation is the DREAM Act.

Where are the well-deserved opportunities for our undocumented youth who have played by the rules, graduated from high school and even college, and stayed out of trouble? In New York and all over the country exceptional students are being denied the chance to succeed. These are youth who have overcome immense obstacles. Many immigrated as young children, often not by their own choice but with a parent, as my grandmother did, and then adjusted to life in the United States. They have struggled for most of their lives with the fear that, at any moment, they or their family members could be deported. Despite these challenges, they have worked hard and have achieved great things.

This is clearly not only a critical issue of civil and educational rights, but a moral issue, one of fundamental fairness. Political indifference to the struggles of undocumented youth goes against everything I know about this country. How can our Senators and Representatives simply look on as these students who have accomplished so much are, in return, forced to lead lives of fear and repression?

There is a solution: the DREAM Act.

The DREAM Act would allow undocumented students to continue on to higher education and eventually apply for citizenship. It would serve as an incentive for the completion of both high school and college and would ensure that DREAM students are prepared to compete in the high-skilled job market. Without the DREAM Act, undocumented



students, regardless of their aspirations and achievements, will be forced to take low-wage work with little hope for advancement.

I was first inspired to begin working in immigrant rights four years ago, when I met a group of undocumented co-workers at an after-school job. Since enrolling at NYU, I have worked on a number of issues – immigrant parents' rights, adult education, economic justice – but none of them has hit home more than the DREAM Act.

The DREAM students whom I have met are young people just like me. They hold the same hopes and aspirations for the future, the same drive and ambition, and the same desire for a lifetime of success and contributions to our society. Why should I be given so many opportunities, when undocumented students have so few? Because of where I was born? Because of a number or a piece of paper?

These aren't answers that satisfy me, and they shouldn't satisfy you.

At this time, I would like to thank the Committees of Higher Education and Immigration for jointly proposing a resolution in support of the DREAM Act. I am proud to live in a city that recognizes the potential of undocumented youth, and the disastrous consequences of denying these young people the right to exercise that potential.

I am also proud to say that the NYU community, including President John Sexton, has expressed support of immigrant students and the need for the DREAM Act. It is yet another testament to the DREAM Act's broad-based support. Our community extends across citizens and non-citizens, public and private universities, activists, educators and youth leaders.

Please use your leadership as elected officials representing New York to urge Senators Clinton and Schumer and our representatives in the House to take notice of the public and political will for the DREAM Act, and to urge them to take a much more active role in ensuring its passage this year. Our senators and representatives should take a lesson from Senators Dick Durbin and Harry Reid, among others, who have been key leaders on the DREAM Act. These students and their families, their friends and their supporters around the city are awaiting action.

Let's make the DREAM Act a reality in 2007 for our youth.

Thank you.

**Catholic Charities, Archdiocese of New York**  
**Testimony to the Council of the City of New York**  
**Hearing on The DREAM Act of 2007**  
**October 24, 2007**

Good afternoon and thank you for the opportunity to testify at this hearing on The Development, Relief, and Education for Alien Minors (DREAM) Act of 2007. My name is Luz Tavarez-Salazar, and I am the Director of Legalization and Immigration Outreach at Catholic Charities Community Services, Archdiocese of New York, an agency that has represented the interests of immigrant New Yorkers for more than 40 years.

For over 40 years Catholic Charities, Archdiocese of New York has worked tirelessly to welcome and integrate immigrants and refugees, including children. In New York State, we are one of the largest immigration legal services providers, helping more than 2,000 individuals every year with legal advice and representation before the immigration authorities in addition to answering 40,000 calls for information. Catholic Charities offers one-stop help to immigrants and refugees whose needs go beyond that for legal assistance only. Our paralegals and attorneys work closely with staff in other departments to maximize the use and availability of language, health, housing, employment, counseling, child care, job training, youth, domestic violence, mental health, and other services and resources.

And so it is through this daily work with thousands of immigrants that we see, time and time again, the struggles and challenges that so many of them face because they lack legal status. Never are these challenges more heart wrenching than when they confront innocent children who, through no fault of their own, are in the United States undocumented. For many, this is the only country they have ever known, but without a way to legalize their status they cannot attend college, access loans or financial aid, or work legally to save tuition money. Moreover, every day and – given the increase in immigration raids – every night, these children face the risk of deportation, many of them to countries they have not ever known. Sadly, those who were brought to the United States in their infancy may not even realize that they are undocumented. Imagine having spent the majority of your life in a country, and studied there all your life, only to learn that in fact you have very few rights in that country because you are undocumented!

In the absence of comprehensive immigration reform, across the nation, legislative bodies at all levels have been attempting to respond with piecemeal measures to the challenges presented by the undocumented immigrant population. While Catholic Charities and the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops have consistently advocated for comprehensive immigration reform and have opposed piecemeal attempts to solve the broken immigration system, we strongly support passage of the DREAM Act, which would give thousands of high-achieving undocumented students the opportunity to meet their potential and better contribute to our society. According to the National Immigration Law Center, each year about 65,000 U.S.-raised students who would qualify for the DREAM Act's benefits graduate from our high schools.

Specifically, the DREAM Act would provide a path to permanent residence and eventual citizenship for undocumented children brought to the United States years ago, provided that they graduate from high school and later pursue higher education or serve in the U.S. military. This

would be a two-stage process. First, students with good moral character, who entered the U.S. before they turned 16 years old and have been physically present in the U.S. for a continuous period of at least five years before enactment of the DREAM Act, would qualify for conditional permanent resident status if they have been admitted to a U.S. institution of higher education, or graduated from a U.S. high school, or earned a general education development (GED) certificate. Conditional residence status would last for six years, and those who pursued at least two years of higher education or military service within this period would be able to earn permanent residence.

The DREAM Act cannot be misconstrued as "amnesty," for it cannot be said to reward lawbreakers. The children it would benefit were brought to this country illegally, or overstayed their visas as minors dependent on their parents. Far from being an amnesty, the DREAM Act proposes to extend the benefit of permanent residence only to deserving students, with good moral character, who have not committed crimes, or present any security risks. They include potential teachers, doctors, nurses, lawyers, engineers, computer analysts, athletes, artists, and businessmen and women, all of them potential taxpayers and contributors to our economy and our society.

All this being said, the DREAM Act is not enough to address the basic challenges and inequities at the heart of United States' failed immigration system. Catholic Charities and the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops have consistently supported a comprehensive immigration reform program. We continue to need comprehensive immigration reform that is humane and corrects the system that is currently not meeting the needs of immigrants, employers and the general public.

I thank you very much for the opportunity to share our concerns and ideas with you.

**Testimony Submitted to the**  
**New York City Council**  
**Committee on Immigration and the Committee on Higher**  
**Education**  
**Hearing on**  
**The DREAM Act of 2007**  
**Wednesday, October 24, 2007**

**On behalf of: The Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society (HIAS)**

For more information, please contact: Adi Beinhert at 212-613-1303

Thank you for this opportunity to testify before the Committee on Immigration and the Committee on Higher Education on the DREAM Act. My name is Adi Beinhert and I work in HIAS' New York Headquarters.

HIAS, the international migration arm of the American Jewish community for 127 years, has assisted over 4.5 million refugees and vulnerable migrants around the world and in the United States by providing overseas assistance, resettlement in communities nationwide, and citizenship and other services to immigrants and refugees

Jewish law mandates that we "welcome the stranger". In the Torah, G-d states: "The stranger who resides with you shall be to you as one of your citizens; you shall love him as yourself, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt" (Leviticus 19:33-34). This is also a mandate reflected in many other faith traditions. In the New Testament, Jesus tells us to welcome the stranger (cf. Matthew 25:35), for "what you do to the least of my brethren, you do unto me (Matthew 25:40)."

The Hindu scripture [Taitiriya Upanishad] tells us: "The guest is a representative of God (1.11.2)"

That being said, the beneficiaries of the DREAM Act are not strangers. Brought to the United States by their parents as young children, these students grew up in America and consider this great country their only home. These students are already part of our communities and that is why entire towns and congregations have rallied behind students who are threatened with dates of deportation.

The thousands of young people in their 20s and 30s who comprise the Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society's volunteer core across the United States choose the DREAM Act as their main advocacy cause year after year. These Jewish professionals and students feel strongly for the DREAM Act because they know these individuals not as "undocumented immigrants" but as their peers and their friends. Not only are these young people already a part of America, but America is already a part of them. They have come of age in the United States, gone to American schools, watch American programs and listen to American music, celebrate American holidays, and speak American English – in sum, they *are* American. The idea of sending them "back" to a country where they haven't lived most of their lives is as impractical as it is inhumane.

We must not forget that these minors never chose to cross the US border, but rather were brought here when they were young. Jewish tradition teaches that, "a child shall not share the burden of a parent's guilt, nor shall a parent share the burden of a child's guilt..." (Ezekiel 18:20). We should not punish these children for their parents' actions, but instead provide them with an opportunity to reach their full potential. We can do so by enabling them to become productive citizens of the United States, whether by furthering their education or serving in the U.S. armed forces.

The DREAM Act will help break the cycle of underemployment, instability and poverty endured by undocumented immigrants by reducing dropout rates, criminal justice costs, and the need for public assistance. It would also reward good behavior by young people who, despite their circumstances, have worked hard and remained in school. The young people who would benefit from the DREAM Act are in the formative years of their lives. Further delay, even just a few years, could have a tragic impact.

HIAS supports the bipartisan DREAM Act because it is sensible, humane, and responds to the needs of vulnerable young students and the communities in which they live. As such, HIAS is an active member of the United We DREAM Campaign, a national effort led by grassroots and national organizations that seeks federal legislation to remove the current barriers preventing undocumented students from continuing their academic and professional development.

The DREAM Act is fundamentally fair legislation that HIAS supports. We urge you to support this measure and make the American dream possible for so many deserving young people.

Sueños del Barrio  
Contact: Yesenia García  
2290 Second Avenue, South Store  
New York, NY 10035  
Tel: (212) 289-9025  
Fax: (212) 289-9026

October 24, 2007  
Testimony in favor of the DREAM Act

Hello All,

We represent Sueños del Barrio, a group of 40 youth from Spanish Harlem and we support the DREAM Act! We represent a cross-section of Latino youth in the community: Citizens, Residents, and Undocumented Students. We believe that this piece of legislation is a long overdue adjustment to our immigration system. The individuals that would benefit from this legislation are outstanding citizens that currently live in the shadows with no real hope of a future. The government must do its job and amend the message that is being sent out to our Youth, "Education is a privilege". Education is not a privilege! It is a right! A right that should not be limited by gender, race or immigration status or any other man imposed category. Students should not have to continuously pay for actions and decisions taken years ago and in which they had no say. All that our Youth seek is the opportunity that all of their peers have: a realistic opportunity to attend and pay for college without the added pressure of a full-time job and no hope of a job after graduation.

Let's support our Youth and our communities by supporting the DREAM Act! Support the children that have grown up amongst you, in your schools, in your playgrounds, in your churches, and in your homes that now only ask to be able to live the American dream. Allow DREAM Act students to live up to their potential! Education is a RIGHT! Not a privilege!



**NEW YORK UNIVERSITY**

A private university in the public service

**Government and Community Affairs**  
University Relations and Public Affairs  
70 Washington Square South, 12<sup>th</sup> Floor  
New York, New York 10012-1019  
telephone: 212 998 6859  
fax: 212 995 4849  
alicia.hurley@nyu.edu

**Alicia D. Hurley, Ph.D.** *Associate Vice-President*

October 22, 2007

The Honorable Jerrold Nadler  
Member of Congress  
2334 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20008

Dear Congressman Nadler:

I am writing to thank you for your co-sponsorship of H.R. 1275, the American DREAM Act. New York University (NYU) supports this legislation that creates a path to citizenship for children of immigrants who entered the U.S. before age 16 and lived here for at least five years if they attend college or embark on military service.

NYU recognizes that New York City owes much of its growth and character to the contribution of immigrant communities and has always encouraged students of all ethnic and economic background to pursue a quality higher education. Expanding educational opportunities for children of immigrants not only helps individual students, it helps entire communities and the nation as a whole. Ensuring an educated and technologically literate workforce, encompassing both U.S. citizens and children of immigrants, is a key ingredient to maintaining our economic competitiveness in today's global economy.

We remain hopeful that Congress will be able to pass the DREAM Act this year. Your leadership on education issues is appreciated and recognized by the NYU community. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Alicia Hurley, Ph.D.  
Associate Vice President  
Government & Community Affairs  
New York University

**New York City Council Hearing on the Dream Act 2007**  
**Committee Room, City Hall**  
**Chairperson (s) Charles Barron and Kendall Stewart**

**Testimonial**

My name is George Priestley. I teach political science at Queens College, CUNY, and for the past 25 years I have served as the Director of the Latin American and Latino Studies Program at said institution. I am also the director and principal investigator of the Ford Foundation funded Afro-Latin@ Project Queens College, CUNY.

My testimony before you today is in support of the DREAM ACT, which I consider as the first step toward a sensible solution toward what many refer to as Comprehensive Immigration Reform. I will speak to the limitation of that concept later. Today I speak to you not only as one who has taught thousands of students over the past 38 years, but also as an immigrant who came to this country 46 years ago, and as the grandson of Jamaican immigrants who migrated to Panama in the early years of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century to build the Panama Canal. Let it be known that in addition to my expertise on the political economy of Latin America and on United States-Latin American relations, I speak from my experience as an Afro-Panamanian and from the experience of my parents and grandparents as documented and then undocumented immigrants to Panama, and from my immigrant and racial experience in the United States. These experiences in Panama and in the United States inform my perspective on the current immigration debate and my unflinching support for the DREAM Act.

My grandparents and parents were amongst the tens of thousands of documented and undocumented workers from the English and French speaking Caribbean who built the Panama Canal. Just like the millions of so-called documented and undocumented immigrants in the United States today, their labor was valued and their economic contribution to the Panamanian economy was appreciated while on the Isthmus; and like these, they were also stereotyped, discriminated, and denied many social, economic and political opportunities. Just like the millions of Asian, African, and Latino undocumented and documented immigrants in the United States today, these English-speaking, Black Antilleans were stereotyped, discriminated, and denied many social, economic and political opportunities for advancement in Panama during the better part of the twentieth century. Like the millions of U.S. documented and undocumented Asian, African, and Latino immigrants, they were seeing as incompatible to the nation. Just like many second and third generation Asian, Latino, and African immigrants in the United States, second and third generation Antillean-Panamanian like me, were/are regarded as what Mae Ngai refers to as *alien citizens*. \*

As is the case today in dozens of U.S. counties where immigrants, documented and undocumented, are under siege in places like Hazleton, Pa. and Prince Williams, Virginia, my grandparents and parents were also subjected to many anti-immigrant ordinances and exclusionary laws in Panama during the 1920s through the 1940s. Denied access to schools, they and their children were accused for not assimilating or integrating



fast enough into the Panamanian society. Similar claims are being made today in the U.S. by nativists activists, journalists and scholars who claim that immigrants, particularly Latinos are not interested in becoming Americans. As a professor at Queens College, CUNY I can tell you that that is not the case. If it is true that many immigrants face language issues as they negotiate their way into the mainstream of U.S. society, the rate at which they learn English is truly impressive. I can offer you many anecdotes on which I base this observation. In 1983 I taught a Latino student who had arrived in the country a year earlier and who was not quite fluent in English. Today that person is a college professor with a Ph.D from CUNY. In 2005 twenty-two years later, there are millions of immigrant students, some brought to this country by undocumented or documented parents, who are eager to follow the same route as my 1983 student, a route towards academic excellence and economic success. The DREAM Act is their last hope; it is the last hope for their families; the last hope for their communities, and the last hope for the United States of America, which MUST level the playing field for these youngsters and unlock the door to equality, opportunity and prosperity for them, for their families, and for this nation. You and I must do everything in our power to convince the U.S. Congress to approve the DREAM Act, NOW.

We should approve the DREAM Act because it is the right thing to do; the moral thing to do, and the economically wise thing to do. Robert Gonzales in the executive summary to his *Wasted Talent and Broken Dreams: The Lost Potential of Undocumented Students* argues forcefully for a sensible solution to the present exclusion of children of undocumented workers. He states that "The current political debate over undocumented immigrants in the United States has largely ignored the plight of undocumented children. Yet children account for 1.8 million, or 15 percent, of the undocumented immigrants now living in this country. These children have, for the most part, grown up in the United States and received much of their primary and secondary educations here. But without a means to legalize their status, they are seldom able to go on to college and cannot work legally in this country. Moreover, at any time, they can be deported to countries they barely know. This wasted talent imposes economic and emotional costs on undocumented students themselves and on U.S. society as a whole. Denying undocumented students, most of whom are Hispanic, the opportunity to go to college and join the skilled workforce sends the wrong message to Hispanics about the value of a college education- and the value that U.S. society places on their education-at a time when raising the educational attainment of the Hispanic population is increasingly important to the nation's economic health."

Among the findings of this report:

- About 65,000 undocumented children who have lived in the United States for five years or longer graduate from high school each year. Although they can legally attend most colleges, they are not eligible for most forms of financial aid.
- Because of the barriers to their continued education and their exclusion from the legal workforce, only between 5 and 10 percent of undocumented high-school graduates go to college.

- Given the opportunity to receive additional education and move into better paying jobs, undocumented students would pay more in taxes and have more money to spend and invest in the U.S. economy.
- The ten states which, since 2001, have passed laws allowing undocumented students who graduate from in-state high schools to qualify for in-state college tuition have not experienced a large influx of new immigrant students that "displaces" native-born students or added financial burdens on their educational systems. In fact, these measures tend to increase school revenues by bringing in tuition from students who otherwise would not be in college.
- The bipartisan Development, Relief, and Education for Alien Minors (DREAM) Act, first introduced in Congress in 2001, would provide a solution to the current dilemma by allowing undocumented students to apply for legal permanent resident status.
- The DREAM Act would provide 360,000 undocumented high-school graduates with a legal means to work, and could provide incentives for another 715,000 youngsters between the ages of 5 and 17 to finish high school and pursue post-secondary education.

As a political scientist and one who has studied Latin America's political economy; United States-Latin American Relations, and race/ethnic relations in the U.S and Latin America, I believe it is time to reframe the immigration debate to include United States foreign and trade policies; labor migration and the global economy, and racial/ethnic relations in the Americas and beyond. This is important because the present discussion overemphasizes closing the border to so-called illegal immigrants who take away jobs from low wage Americans, and who, it is claimed abuse governmental resources and commit crimes, and engage in zero-sum competition with African-Americans. It is our duty to reframe the debate and introduce a humanitarian and social justice perspective that takes into account racial/ethnic solidarity and that accounts for the effects and consequences of U.S. foreign and trade policies, and for the role of labor migration in the global economy.

Khalil Nieves, son of a Puerto Rican father and a mother from Virginia and one whose wife is from St. Lucia, wrote an article, *Latino and African American workers in the global economy* where he sheds light on a number of issues pertinent to our proposed humanitarian and social justice agenda. He reminds us that **"most people extricate themselves from familiar environments only when their survival and well being are in jeopardy"**. Second, he draws on Mike Davis's [Planet Slum](#) to outline the intersection of United States foreign and trade policies, the global economy, and the impact of IMF structural adjustment agreements on regional poverty and migration. Nieves's article can be read at [www.afrolatinoproject.org](http://www.afrolatinoproject.org).

Lastly, in the reframing of the immigration debate we must work diligently towards the construction of a multi-ethnic/racial community based social justice agenda in order to empower the coalition of the new majority. For this to happen it is necessary to build

bridges within and between our diverse ethnic/racial communities; build bridges of respect; build bridges of social justice, and above all build bridges of solidarity.

Finally, today it is our duty to ensure the immediate passage of the DREAM Act, a necessary step towards the reframing of the immigration debate and towards the empowerment of the new majority. The Afro-Latin@ Project at Queens College sends an urgent message to Senators Hillary Clinton, Charles Schumer and all of their colleagues in the United States Senate: PASS THE DREAM ACT, NOW.

\* Ngai, Mae M. *Impossible Subjects: Illegal Aliens and the Making of Modern America*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004.



**THE NEW YORK IMMIGRATION COALITION**

137-139 West 25th Street, 12th Floor

New York, NY 10001-7277

Tel: (212) 627-2227

Fax: (212) 627-9314

[www.thenyic.org](http://www.thenyic.org)

**TESTIMONY OF ANGELA LEE, PROGRAM ASSOCIATE FOR  
THE NEW YORK IMMIGRATION COALITION**

**before**

**THE NEW YORK CITY COUNCIL IMMIGRATION COMMITTEE**

**October 24, 2007**

Good afternoon. I want to thank the members of the Immigration and Higher Education Committee for holding this important hearing, in particular Committee Chairs Charles Barron and Kendall Stewart, and for inviting us to testify on the DREAM Act. My name is Angela Lee, and I am the Program Associate for the Immigration Advocacy Program at the New York Immigration Coalition (NYIC). The NYIC is a statewide umbrella policy and advocacy organization for over 200 member organizations throughout New York State that promotes justice and opportunities for immigrants and refugees.

In Congress and in localities around the country, the debate around immigration has been emotional and complex. Last year, Congress considered a proposal, H.R. 4437, also known as the "Sensenbrenner-King" bill (after its original co-sponsors, Reps. James Sensenbrenner (R-WI) and Peter King (R-NY), which focused on draconian and punitive enforcement measures that would terrorize millions of immigrants who are working hard to provide for their families. The historic response from millions of immigrant community members and their allies, who took to the streets to protest H.R. 4437, created the momentum necessary to defeat this proposal. We were able to show that these measures are costly, unrealistic, and, more importantly, they are inhumane and un-American.

This year in the 110th Congress, the comprehensive immigration reform debate has once again failed. As a result of inaction at the federal level, the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) and Immigration Customs Enforcement (ICE) has stepped up internal enforcement as a means of dealing with a dysfunctional immigration system. Every day that passes without comprehensive immigration reform is a day when families are shattered by separation from deportations or waiting hopelessly for years on end to be reunited with their loved ones.

Congress has the opportunity to take a positive step to begin to address the broken immigration system. Last week, Senators Durbin (D-IL), Hagel (R-NE) and Richard Lugar (R-IN) re-introduced the DREAM Act as a new stand-alone bill, S. 2205. The proposed legislation would give undocumented youth a path to citizenship for those who graduate from high school, attend higher education or serve in the military for 2 years. The DREAM Act would provide hope to immigrant students and lead many more of them to remain in school. As an example of the fiscal benefits of this legislation, a RAND study showed that a 30-year-old Mexican immigrant woman who graduates from college will pay \$5,300 more in taxes and cost \$3,900 less in government expenses each year than if she had dropped out of high school. This amounts to an annual fiscal benefit of over \$9,000 per person every year, money that can be used to pay for the education of other children. The Migration Policy Institute estimates that there are over 360,000 young people that would stand to benefit from the DREAM Act. This sound policy would have an enormous impact in the lives of thousands of youth in New York City.

We applaud the New York City Council for urging lawmakers at the federal level to pass the DREAM Act. An estimated 30,000 undocumented youth could stand to benefit from the DREAM Act in New York State. State and local taxpayers have already invested in the education of these children in elementary and secondary school and deserve to get a return on their investment.

On behalf of the New York Immigration Coalition and its 200-plus member organizations, several of whom are here to testify before you today, I wish to thank you for the opportunity to provide this testimony.

# Cabrini

IMMIGRANT SERVICES

My name is Christina Baal and I am the Director of Immigrant Family Services at Cabrini Immigrant Services. Cabrini is a multi-service agency located on the Lower East Side of Manhattan that served over 15,000 residents of New York City and outlying suburbs last year, many of whom were students or relatives of students who faced immense barriers in reaching their goals of higher education. I am here to speak on their behalf.

All tax payers, not just immigrant students, would benefit from the passage of the DREAM Act. According to a Rand study, a college graduate stands to generate an annual fiscal benefit of \$9000. If the DREAM act were passed today an estimated 300,000 students would immediately qualify for Legal Permanent Residence and would be able to work legally at higher paying jobs, entering a higher tax bracket. This means that by passing the Dream Act, \$2.7 billion could immediately be generated in tax dollars in one year alone, not including any revenue from immigration application fees paid by Dream Act applicants. This is \$2.7 billion dollars that is already owed to us and that we are literally sitting on instead of collecting and reinvesting. Ironically, much of our opposition spread falsehoods that the undocumented are benefiting from our educational system and not paying back into it despite that fact that immigrants pay taxes using their ITIN numbers. The truth is that it is our own laws that prevent the undocumented from earning what they are worth and paying the higher amounts of taxes that they are willing to pay.

Passing the Dream Act also stands to create 1.2 million skilled workers in countless industries. Some of our students at Cabrini have already graduated college with honors, have passed licensing tests in their prospective fields, and are ready to contribute their labor and tax dollars as soon as they are eligible. Again, it is our broken immigration system, not their intent, that stops us from reaping the fruits of our own educational system. Our country is constantly trying to remain competitive in many fields but again we are sitting on the resources that will help us do that instead of utilizing them to the fullest potential. My father moved to New York from the Philippines in 1969 when immigration laws created more opportunities for hard working immigrants. He came with \$200 in his pocket and is now a retired home owner with three professional daughters who each have Masters Degrees. The three of us, a lawyer, a public school teacher, and a social worker, are representative of what potentially lies ahead for the 1.2 million students who would be impacted by the DREAM Act. Our family is an example of what happens when opportunities are created that allow immigrant families to realize their full potential.

Finally, some of my young clients who could not miss class to be here today wanted me to pass along a few messages to all of you. Pablo, a 21 year-old computer engineering student said "please help pass the Dream Act so that I can provide for my family and

work for a company where my talents can be utilized.” Lisa, a 20 year-old education major said “I never did anything wrong. I’m not a criminal. I work two jobs and am a full time student. Please help pass the Dream Act so I can stay with my family and become an elementary school teacher like I’ve always dreamed.” 15 year-old Adriana said “I was little when I came here. I didn’t know what any of this meant, all I knew was that my dad was sick and I wanted to go to the US to be with him. I want a job where I can help others the way I have been helped. I need the DREAM act to do that.”

Thank you for your time.

Written Testimony of  
Walter Barrientos-Founding Member, New York State Youth Leadership Council  
(NYSYLC)

Before the

NYC Council Committees on Higher Education and Immigration Hearing  
Chairperson(s): Charles Barron, Kendall Stewart

October 24, 2007

On behalf of the New York State Youth Leadership Council and all of the DREAM Act eligible youth in New York City, I would like to thank you for supporting this legislation and for conveying this message to our federal elected officials. This is timely as the Senate is expected to be taking a very important vote on the DREAM Act at this very moment.

My name is Walter Barrientos, I am an alumnus of Baruch College, and one of the founding members of the New York State Youth Leadership Council. We are a network of young leaders advocating for the advancement of immigrant youth through increased access to higher education. Our legislative priority is the DREAM Act since before it was introduced for the first time in the Senate back in 2001.

We founded our organization because as immigrant college students we realized the barriers that some of us in our group and many of our peers were facing in accessing higher education simply for not having immigration status.

The problem addressed by the DREAM Act is just another clear symptom of our outdated and broken immigration system. Currently, under our family based immigration system, the main way to attain immigration status is by having a citizen or lawful permanent resident parent, sibling, or spouse petitioning for you. The problem with Dream Act youth is that they generally came here together with their direct relatives, all of whom also do not have immigration status. Other youth are also without status because their relatives petitioned for them but their petitions are caught in the never ending backlog of family petitions waiting to be processed by the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS). Many have actually aged out of these petitions because they turned 21 before their family petitions were processed.

Currently there is no legal way for young people who have grown up in the United States to adjust their immigration status without a family member petitioning for them. The DREAM Act would create mechanism for these young people to adjust their immigration status based on all that they have, their education and aspirations for the future.



Presumably New York City has one of the highest concentrations of DREAM Act eligible youth because of our demographics, the reach of the 19 CUNY campuses all across the city, accessibility through public transportation, and New York State Policies recognizing all high school graduates from New York as residents for tuition purposes at all public colleges throughout the state. With only a handful of exceptions, all of the DREAM Act students that the New York State Youth Leadership Council represents are currently attending CUNY or are aspiring CUNY students. This is also significant for our communities and for their families because, for the most part they are the first in their family to attend or graduate from college.

I have no official reports to document this, but I can tell you that through the work of our organization, which is volunteer based, we have met CUNY graduates with degrees in nursing, teaching, business, science and technology degrees, social workers, law school graduates and many masters and even some Ph.D. students whose lives, careers and potential contributions as professionals are being completely truncated because the DREAM Act has not been passed. These are the bright young people that we all see everyday working at our restaurants, neighborhood businesses, and babysitters. The lack of immigration reform and passage of the DREAM Act are literally voiding the investment and need that our city and state have on these bright and prosperous individuals. Given or shortage of bilingual professionals, teachers, doctors, and nurses to name a few, this city and our country just cannot afford to allow this to continue.

Finally, I would like to close by commending you and urge all of you to place a call to our Senators today demanding that they make sure the DREAM Act is passed this year. There was a time when both of our senators and the entire congressional delegation from NYC, with the exception of Vito Fossella were signed on as co-sponsors of the DREAM Act. Today we have many representatives who have not signed on as co-sponsors, including Senator Schumer. But right now, we have none of our New York elected officials in Washington D.C. making sure that this bill is passed.

**New York City Council Hearing on the Dream Act 2007**  
**Committee Room, City Hall**  
**Chairperson (s) Charles Barron and Kendall Stewart**

**Testimonial**

My Name is Jonathan Gilad, I am a student at Queens College in New York City, where I am studying History and Political Science. I also serve my college as the Deputy Holder of the Chair of the Academic Senate, President Emeritus of the Political Science Club and the Model United Nations Delegation, and the Chairman of the minority student political party, the Democratic Student Alliance.

It is obvious from the extent of my involvement in the College, that I am not shy or scared of being in the spotlight. However, my first semester at Queens College I was just that- a shy, closed minded freshman who was nervous in large social gatherings and anyone not Jewish. This all changed one day, when I met a fellow student named Sandra, who not only helped me overcome my own insecurities and anxieties, but taught me how to be a student leader. Sandra also helped me shed many of my own prejudices of other peoples. She also opened my mind, showed me how wonderful America and New York City is with its multicultural diversity and its dedication to freedom and democracy,

When Sandra told me she was an undocumented immigrant, I was shocked. Here was a girl who was smart, capable, articulate, and most of all a true leader and yet that meant nothing to an immigration officer. It was here that I became aware of the problems of our immigration system, that people like Sandra, who have shown that not only are they law abiding people, but that they lived the American Dream than most Americans today, yet America was turning its back on them. This reminded me of my grandmother and her extended family of over 36, who tried to immigrate to the United States in the 1930's to escape Nazi Germany. Yet America turned its back on them too, and her family was denied entry and subsequently perished in Auschwitz. It was only after the Holocaust that America opened its doors, but by then my grandmother was one of 3 surviving sisters who made it to New York. When she passed away this summer her family name was forever lost because freedom was denied to them. I couldn't as an American allow America to turn its back on these students who not only deserve the right of freedom and democracy, but grew up as much as an American as I.

I then found out that there was hope for Sandra and the thousands of others like her. I learned about the DREAM Act, and I never saw a more perfect or more appropriate act for a country like the United States.

This act would allow undocumented students who have a high school diploma and completed two years of higher education or joined the military a path to legalization. This is in no way giving a handout to these students, since most of these children must work two or three jobs to support their education and in many cases their families. I like many students at Queens College, have a job, but I could not imagine working two or three while maintaining a G.P.A of 3.8 or higher as many of these students do. By passing this Act, Congress will be ensuring that America has a bright and college educated population who can ensure American competitiveness in the Global Economy.

As a student and as an American Citizen I am proud to say that I support the DREAM act. I applaud our city council representatives for taking the initiative of passing a resolution in support of the DREAM Act and for having this hearing. I would like to also thank Senator Clinton for her co-sponsorship of this bill. I can only hope that many of her Colleges will follow her in ensuring that America still has a DREAM.

## FOR THE RECORD

Imagine sitting in the comfort of your Aunt's home minding your own business when all of a sudden, a strange man whom you call "Uncle" comes from a country you know very little about and takes you with him. I was only 12 at the time and very excited to be relocating to the United States of America from my native land Ghana. I arrived on the 12<sup>th</sup> day of April in the year 2002 with very mixed emotions because I had no idea of the new life and the vast mix of culture on this land. The first few years of my life in the states have been very different looking at my earliest perception of it. I thought life was going to be nothing more than a ride in the park, but waiting ahead in my tracks were times of stress, hardships, and mental fatigue which I feel on a daily basis.

I arrived to the United States in the middle of my 7<sup>th</sup> grade year and quickly began my transition from a West African to an East American (Virginia). My academic performance in the 7<sup>th</sup> grade wasn't so good because I felt like a lost soul in the dark. Kids in my history class would talk about the American Revolution when I didn't even know where my state of residence (Virginia) was located on the map. Beginning 8<sup>th</sup> grade, I caught on, and those "D's" started turning into "A's". Everyone was shocked and proud of my performance from then on.

At my middle school, an awards ceremony was organized for 8<sup>th</sup> graders who had succeeded and were moving on to high school. I received many awards and the biggest one was what they call the "Citizenship" award. It was giving to me due to good moral standing and character in my school community. I didn't understand how I was given the Citizenship award out of my 8<sup>th</sup> grade class; I wasn't even documented let alone be a citizen. Years later, I've learned that you don't need an American passport to be a good citizen, you need a good heart.

I completed my first year of high school in Virginia and eventually relocated to Bronx, New York with my parents. Life in New York as an undocumented immigrant has been easier than it was in Virginia. I believe this is due to the fact that all you need in New York is two dollars to get around the city without a car and there are a lot more people in my situation here than in Virginia.

I sit here now at the end of my 12<sup>th</sup> grade year wandering how I'm going to make it through college, wandering what I'll tell my peers when they ask me why I'm not out looking for a job or why I'm not going to the DMV to acquire my driver's license. I

guess this is all part of life, after all everyone has problems; and besides, there is an end to everything. This is why I'm believing strongly in the passage of the DREAM ACT for the year of 2007. I've assimilated into the American life and learned to love this great country with countless opportunities. There are many students just like me who are struggling to make it just like I am. The passage of the DREAM ACT will create a bright future for America, a future full of hard working determined individuals.

In college I want to acquire my Bachelors degree in chemistry and move on to attaining my Pharm D (Doctorate of Pharmacy) which will result in me becoming a licensed pharmacist. Since childhood, my ultimate dream has been to help my fellow brothers and sisters back home in Ghana who are in desperate need of aid. With my interest in the field of Pharmacy, I'll be able to make my dream come true. This dream however won't be established without the DREAM ACT in effect.

## FOR THE RECORD

### AMY'S PERSONAL STORY

**Name:** Amy

**Location:** New York

I am an American. I am also an undocumented immigrant.

Before I was born in 1978, my father was involved with the Tangwai . It was a movement in Taiwan whose main objective was to re-establish constitutional rights taken away by the Chinese Nationalists ( Kuomintang ) after they had come into power in 1949. The grassroots-level work of the Tangwai eventually led to Taiwan 's independence from China .

Involvement with the Tangwai was considered subversive at the time. As a means to silence my father, the Kuomintang police power destroyed our home with sledgehammers. Our family stayed with one relative after another, running away in terror. We were afraid to be one of the other families involved with the Tangwai - the ones who seemed to disappear into thin air, or the individuals turning up with a bullet in their head. As I write this article, I am reluctant to say the scope of father's activity, as we still live with the fear of what can happen.

My father felt the best way to protect his wife and three daughters was to leave the island as soon as possible. After working with the U.S. Air Force in previous years, he believed America had much to offer. We left Taiwan on tourist visas in early 1982, with no intention to return.

I was three years old.

When we arrived in the United States , my parents did not contact lawyers. They did not know the language, and did not know anyone to turn to for help. Arriving in Los Angeles with only a few thousand U.S. dollars and three children to feed, one thing was clear: they needed money. Immediately, they began working. Despite having studied to become a civil engineer in Taiwan , my father became a cook in a restaurant, and my mother washed dishes.

The restaurant promised to file legalization papers on behalf of my parents, but in exchange my parents were to be paid very little. Everything seemed to cost more than expected in America . After working at three different restaurants simultaneously, my father decided the hours were lousy and the payoff was not enough to support a family. Instead of staying with this plan, my father became a motel manager in a bad neighborhood of San Bernardino . Here, he was to be paid a thousand dollars a month, and our family would receive living facilities-the manager's quarters- for free.

One year to the day we arrived in the United States , an armed gunman came into the manager's office and demanded the money from the cash register. He pointed the revolver just above the collarbone of my father's left shoulder, down into the torso region. My dad

was naïve, and said the money was not his to give. So the gunman shot my father. He then took the money in the register, and ran to his motorcycle getaway where another person waited.

My father spent six months in the hospital, having repeated operations with complications resulting from adhesions. When I read the doctor's notes, my father's condition was reported as "stable, but the patient worries about how he will make money for his family."

When he finally recovered a year later, my father moved our family out of San Bernardino to a much safer neighborhood in the Los Angeles suburbs. He decided to leave previous plans behind and to go into business for himself. Utilizing his education in civil engineering, he started his own construction business.

Immigration laws have come and gone. The Immigration Reform and Control Act (IRCA) of 1986 gave a blanket amnesty for those who arrived before January 1, 1982 . Our family arrived three and a half weeks after this deadline, and therefore did not qualify due to this technicality. We could not do anything about our status.

In second grade, in the multi-purpose room of my elementary school, I chimed along with others in music class,

*This land is your land, This land is my land,*

My sisters and I liked it here and wanted to belong. We got ourselves American names and worked hard to fit in. As I got older, I enjoyed participating in community service with my classmates. I usually spent afternoons finishing up on homework, nights watching Star Trek: The Next Generation or rehearsing with my high school marching band, playing the clarinet. I also hung out at the mall with my friends on the weekends.

*From California , To the New York Islands ,*

But every year brought with it a sense of being unwelcome in a country we sought to call home. I was oblivious to immigration laws until I became older. When I was fifteen, I learned California Proposition 187 took away access to public services, including driver's licenses, from undocumented immigrants. It didn't matter that my parents paid income taxes every year since they had arrived in the U.S. It also made in-state college tuition for immigrants like me illegal, even though I had lived in California since I was three years old.

*To the Redwood Forests, To the Gulf Stream Wa-ters,*

Further, lawyers were reluctant to take our case. Declaring amnesty was not going to work because Americans knew very little about the political upheaval in Taiwan . We therefore did not qualify as political asylum candidates, as Taiwan was not considered a

“priority” country unlike China or Vietnam . Therefore, our best bet in becoming legal was to marry a U.S. citizen.

*This land was made for you and me.*

I finished high school with honors, and looked forward to college. “The FAFSA opens the door to the federal student aid process,” the application said, “every step you take will get you closer to achieving your educational goals.” One exception: I did not qualify because I couldn't check the little box saying I was a legal resident of the United States .

My father thought a college education was vital to success in America , so he and my mother worked like superheroes to put my sisters and myself through college, paying out-of-state tuition for each of us. My California state education cost \$17,000 a year, more than three times the \$4,500 tuition legal residents enjoyed.

As I entered college, I began to learn the boundaries which exist for an undocumented immigrant in America . One of the first things I did as a new college student was to visit the campus of a well-known academic university in San Diego . I was excited to see where I would be spending the next four years of my life. Our family rode southbound the 5 freeway and watched as the landscape changed from evergreen trees to deep blue shores.

While driving through the San Onofre Mountains, a yellow highway sign caught my attention. It was posted in the middle of a highway, a yellow rectangular type with a silhouette of a three-member family holding hands and running, with the child flying up like a tail of a kite. The unmistakable word, CAUTION , was written across the top. It took only a moment for me to realize the sign was a warning to oncoming traffic about immigrants running across the eight-lane freeway, away from the border patrol.

As we drove further south, I became more mindful of my family's place in America . I looked across the freeway and observed that the northbound traffic had slowed down. Each car was individually stopped by border patrol agents.

“I don't want to come down here again,” my mother said while looking out the window. “I don't feel safe.”

In the years to follow, I tried not to fixate on my undocumented status. But in time I began hearing tales from my friends who studied abroad in Spain , England , and Australia . They would speak of their adventures backpacking through Europe , showing me pictures of these huge metal sculptures by Jean Tinguely in Paris . A friend said he realized he found the love of his life on one of the islands of Costa Rica .

I wanted more than anything to be a part of these adventures. I would feel this despair even when hearing my friends bragging about their latest exploits from Wednesday and Saturday nights spent down in nearby Tijuana . For example, when they returned home,



they'd hold up a large chipped ceramic statue of a frog or an unauthorized replica of Homer Simpson and say, "Five, bucks! Can you believe it?"

Despite the fact that I would probably never have any use for these trinkets, I wanted more than anything to be in Mexico and other countries with my friends, creating new memories in my life. But I never ventured to go past the border. Despite my perfect English, I was afraid there would be something giving me away at the border check. I believed if I traveled down to T.J. with my friends on a harmless night, the stories I would bring back would be much more tragic, assuming I could return at all.

To occupy myself, I thought perhaps I could get a job. I was hoping the advice attorneys had given us for years happened to be wrong- a misunderstanding. When I tried applying for employment at a retail clothing store, I was met with the same little box which stopped me from applying for the FAFSA: I needed some form of documentation to prove my legal status. According to something they called the "I-9" form, I needed a U.S. passport or a green card, and a Social Security card to work. I didn't possess either of the first two documents, and the Social Security card I was issued as a child had some additional printing across the top which I never noticed before: "NOT VALID FOR EMPLOYMENT PURPOSES."

Without proper documentation, no one in my family was allowed to work in any setting requiring tax withholding- to file a ' W-2 .' This meant no health insurance, no retirement benefits, or anything else to ensure our health and welfare.

I was afraid to fake documentation because I did not want to risk my own deportation. To do so would, in effect, also place my family in jeopardy. So instead, I worked odd cash-paying jobs. I helped people pack and move to new homes. I tutored high school kids. Neither paid much money. I even considered being an egg donor when I saw ads in the school newspaper.

\* \* \*

Thanksgiving 1999. I would be graduating in six months. My father sat across from the black obsidian coffee table, with a large roasted bird placed on the reflective surface before us. It was prepared in my father's "traditional" Chinese style, with garlic, green onions, and soy sauce.

He cleared his throat. "So did you find a nice boy, someone to marry?"

I knew where this question was going. The immigration attorneys repeatedly told us it was the easiest way to become legal in this country. But the better years of college were spent in search of the perfect major, and not the perfect "husband."

My face became hot. I felt it was such an unfair question. I refused to accept marriage as a matter of convenience for my own immigration status. I wanted to tell him, ' No, it goes against everything I was taught to believe —by you and everyone else. '

But all I could do was to look down at my empty plate and say, "No, dad. I did not."  
Then my father sighed, and began carving the turkey.

\* \* \*

I was at a loss for what I would do after graduation. On one hand, I could finish school and move back home with my parents. I hated the idea of moving back home, and would have done anything to avoid this fate. My other option was to stay in San Diego, learn the skills of a new profession, and, by my dad's words, "buy time" until I found a husband.

So I started law school. It seemed to be the right decision.

Spring 2001. Almost finished with my first year as a law student, I spoke to an attorney about the reinstatement of Section 245(i). It was a law where undocumented immigrants were given the opportunity to apply for permanent residence without having to leave the U.S. The person filing for a green card either had to be related to a family member who was a legal resident, or had to be hired by a U.S. company.

This provided a loophole for the few who obtained employment with fake documentation. While not all immigrants use fake papers, the government in essence, was promising to look the other way for those who did when applying for green cards—just this one time.

I couldn't believe it. I never followed through with applying for a job because I believed it would have jeopardized my chances of gaining legal employment, legal residency, and ultimately U.S. citizenship. I was doing my best to play by the rules, but it wasn't paying off.

Attorneys were still unwilling to take my case: "Right now, you're just a scholar," one said to me, referring to my then-current status as a law student. "You don't have a job. You don't have an offer of employment. I'm sorry, I can't work with you."

Soon after, I learned for the first time that the American Bar Association does a background check on each person before taking the state bar. At this point, I no longer saw any reason to continue. I left law school and moved back home to the suburbs and got by, tutoring high school students in my neighborhood.

I look back at the twenty-two years I've spent in this country. I've been taught to love the United States and its values above all else. What I cherish most is the freedom to speak without concern of being persecuted by the government. My family did not have this freedom in Taiwan. And despite everything my family has experienced in this country, I would not choose to be anywhere else.

I hope the DREAM Act becomes a reality this year, as it will allow myself and others like me to become legal in a country we have come to love. If it is enacted, I have a to-do list.

It is short because I am afraid set my hopes too high. I will go out and find a secure job, finally utilizing my college degree. I will travel to other countries, including Taiwan , to put a physical setting to all the stories I heard as a child. Most importantly, I will stop living in fear.

But for now, it is still a dream.