

CITY COUNCIL  
CITY OF NEW YORK

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TRANSCRIPT OF THE MINUTES

of the

COMMITTEE ON IMMIGRATION

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March 27, 2012  
Start: 10:19 a.m.  
Recess: 10:27 a.m.

HELD AT: Council Chambers  
City Hall

B E F O R E:  
DANIEL DROMM  
Chairperson

COUNCIL MEMBERS:  
Charles Barron  
Mathieu Eugene  
Ydanis A. Rodriguez  
Jumaane D. Williams

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Good morning.

My name is Daniel Dromm and I'm the chair of New York City Council Committee on Immigration. This morning, the Committee will vote on two resolutions in support of immigrant families who want to pursue the American dream through higher education. Proposed resolution No. 803-A calls on the New York State Legislature to pass and the governor to sign the New York DREAM Act Sponsored by Senator Perkins and Assemblyman Linares. If enacted the New York DREAM Act would provide undocumented students with access to state and locally funded forums of financial aid so that they can pursue a college education. In order to be eligible for the benefits provided by the New York DREAM Act, an undocumented student would have to establish that they received their high school diploma or its equivalent, entered the United States before turning 18, are under 35, have not been convicted of a violent felony and have at least one parent or guardian who immigrated to the United States. The creation of a DREAM fund commission would ensure that there would be a designated office in New York State dedicated to

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2 advancing the academic opportunities of first  
3 generation New Yorkers, those with at least one  
4 immigrant parent through scholarship  
5 opportunities. Additionally, this legislation  
6 would also allow individuals with a taxpayer  
7 identification number to open a New York 529  
8 family tuition account. We held a hearing with  
9 the Committee on Higher Education, chaired by my  
10 colleague, Council Member Ydanis Rodriguez, on  
11 these resolutions just last week where we received  
12 testimony from more than 40 witnesses in support  
13 of the passage of the resolutions. Many of those  
14 witnesses would be direct beneficiaries of the  
15 passage of these resolutions and the state bills  
16 that they discuss. With that in mind, I would  
17 like to encourage all my colleagues to vote aye  
18 for the proposed resolution No. 803-A and  
19 resolution No. 1219. With that, I would like to  
20 say that we have joined today by the chair of the  
21 Higher Education Committee, Ydanis Rodriguez, by  
22 Council Member Charles Barron from Brooklyn and  
23 Council Member Jumaane Williams from Brooklyn as  
24 well. Now I'd like to give my co-chair, Council  
25 Member Ydanis Rodriguez, the opportunity to say a

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few words.

COUNCIL MEMBER RODRIGUEZ: Thank you, Chairman. Nearly 40% of New York City residents are immigrants, and a little over 20% of these immigrants are undocumented. We need better solutions for the children of the 655,000 undocumented immigrants in New York City who live here most of their lives. If passed, our resolutions would show that the New York City Council believes in giving opportunities to immigrants regardless of their documentation status. Education is a basic right, and by refusing to help undocumented students gain financial aid for college, we are saying that they don't deserve those rights. I hope that the entire Immigration Committee and later on, the New York City Council will be able to join me in saying that we as elected representatives of this city not only believe that undocumented students deserve the right, but that we are going to continue working with our state representatives to pass the DREAM Act and make these students' dreams a reality. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you,

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2 Council Member Rodriguez, and now I'd like to ask  
3 my colleague, Council Member Williams to say a few  
4 words.

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7 COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIAMS: Thank  
8 you. Thank you, Mr. Chair. I'm very excited to  
9 be voting on these resolutions. I hope people  
10 take notice in the state and federal to really  
11 push forward so much needed reforms. Immigrants  
12 definitely in this city and this country are the  
13 lifeblood of this country and this is an easy one.  
14 We're dealing with students who came here no fault  
15 of their own, want to make themselves better  
16 citizens, better residents, and we need to afford  
17 them the opportunity because the options other  
18 than that are bad, and then what we see many times  
19 is police will come in when poor choices are made,  
20 so we need to provide every possible opportunity  
21 for people to better themselves, get a better  
22 education to do better in this city and do better  
23 in this country, and I'm frustrated when we don't  
24 do these things and then the answer have is stop  
25 and frisk more police tactics. We need to provide

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2 as much opportunity as humanly possible and I'm a  
3 first generation Brooklyn—my family from Grenada.  
4 I understand firsthand the trials and tribulations  
5 of immigrant families. Thank you. I'm very proud  
6 to be voting on this. Thank you to both chairs.

7 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you very  
8 much, and now my colleague from Brooklyn, Charles  
9 Barron.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER BARON: Thank you  
11 very much. I'm more than glad and excited to vote  
12 on these bills and I just want to remind people as  
13 I did in the testimony when we had our hearing  
14 we're not us any favors. Undocumented immigrants  
15 pay billions of dollars in taxes, so if their tax  
16 money is good enough for you to take, then it's  
17 good enough for you to give some back, so that  
18 they can go ahead and get some education and  
19 higher education. So we're not asking no favors.  
20 We're saying that is justice to give back a  
21 portion of their taxpaying dollars to fund higher  
22 education, and as I always say, I'm always going  
23 to keep the race element in immigration. When the  
24 immigrants were white, they were discriminated  
25 against, yes, but they came through Ellis Island

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2 and it was easier to get processed for citizenship  
3 and when the complexion of immigration changes, so  
4 does the policies. Racism is an evil that we need  
5 to eradicate. It's systemic, and it applies to  
6 immigrants as well it applies to those of us of  
7 color, who are actual citizens, so you know when  
8 we're catching hell, you know what they're going  
9 to do to immigrants. I think these two bills are  
10 a step in the right direction. We have a long way  
11 to go, and we need to keep the pressure on this  
12 country to respect those who contribute to the  
13 economic wellbeing of this country, to the  
14 intellectual capital of this country, to the  
15 cultural capital of this country. It makes this  
16 country what it is, and some of the people that  
17 are blocking this very thing are immigrants  
18 themselves from Europe, and have the nerve to try  
19 to not allow people of color to reunite with their  
20 families when the indigenous people of this  
21 country are the very people that you're trying to  
22 block from coming in who were here before you and  
23 now you set some policies to stop them uniting  
24 with their families and to get higher education.  
25 I gladly support these bills.

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2 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you very  
3 much, and before we vote, I just want to take an  
4 opportunity to say thank you to Julian Bedford  
5 [phonetic], my counsel, to Jennifer Montalvo  
6 [phonetic], our analyst and to Crystal Cotton  
7 [phonetic], the senior legislative financial  
8 analyst for all the work that you did and  
9 especially for the hearing that we held last week.  
10 There was a tremendous amount of work, and I'm  
11 very proud to be able to work with you. Thank  
12 you. With that, we will call the vote.

13 COMMITTEE CLERK: William Martin,  
14 Committee Clerk. Roll call vote in the Committee  
15 on Immigration. Council Member Dromm?

16 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: I vote aye.

17 COMMITTEE CLERK: Barron?

18 COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: Aye.

19 COMMITTEE CLERK: Rodriguez?

20 COUNCIL MEMBER RODRIGUEZ: Aye.

21 COMMITTEE CLERK: Williams?

22 COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIAMS: Aye.

23 COMMITTEE CLERK: By a vote of four  
24 in the affirmative, zero in the negative and no  
25 abstentions, both items have been adopted.



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2 Members, please sign the Committee reports. Thank  
3 you.

4 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: I'd like to  
5 keep the vote open for 15 minutes if anybody wants  
6 to come in--the last Council Member to vote, we'll  
7 allow that to happen. With that, thank you, and  
8 that's it for now. Thank you.

9 COMMITTEE CLERK: Council Member  
10 Eugene?

11 COUNCIL MEMBER EUGENE: Thank you  
12 very much. May I explain my vote? This vote is a  
13 very important one. This bill is a very important  
14 one, not only for thousands of young people who  
15 are yearning to have the opportunity to go to  
16 school to have an education, but this is a very  
17 important bill for the city of New York and for  
18 the United States. Thousands of people what they  
19 are looking for, they are looking for the  
20 opportunity to educate themselves, to have the  
21 best education that they can have and to become  
22 positive and proactive citizens. They don't want  
23 to stay at the corner of the street to do bad  
24 things. They want to become the leaders of  
25 tomorrow, and we all say all the time we say that

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2 the young people, they are the future of this  
3 country, but we have to mean it. We have to be  
4 serious about it. Many of our leaders, many of  
5 our professionals and businessman, they had the  
6 opportunity to go to school, and that's the same  
7 opportunity those young people are looking for,  
8 and it is our responsibility to ensure that we  
9 provide them with the best opportunities for them  
10 to become positive and proactive citizens. I want  
11 to commend the leadership of the chairman of the  
12 Immigration Committee, Council Member Dromm and  
13 all my colleagues, who support this bill and all  
14 of the staff also, who have been working hard to  
15 make this possible. Having said that, I vote aye.

16 COMMITTEE CLERK: Final vote in the  
17 Committee on Immigration stands at five in the  
18 affirmative, zero in the negative and no  
19 abstentions. Thank you.

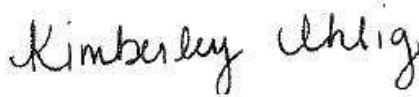
20 COUNCIL MEMBER EUGENE: This  
21 hearing is adjourned.

22 [gavel]

C E R T I F I C A T E

I, Kimberley Uhlig 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

Handwritten signature of Kimberley Uhlig in cursive script, written over a horizontal line.

Date 4/7/12

Handwritten date 4/7/12, written over a horizontal line.