



Legislation Text

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Res. No. 1087-A

Resolution urging the United States Congress to pass the Development, Relief, and Education for Alien Minors Act of 2009, which would provide a path to citizenship for aspiring immigrant youth who were brought to the United States as young children.

By Council Members Stewart, Brewer, James, Palma, Mark-Viverito, Barron, Arroyo, Eugene, Mealy, Jackson, Liu and Weprin

Whereas, Children account for 1.8 million, or 15 percent, of the approximately 12 million undocumented immigrants living in the United States; of these undocumented children, about 65,000 who have lived in the United States for five years or longer graduate from high school each year; and

Whereas, These children, born abroad, yet brought at an early age to live in the United States by their parents, have some association with their countries of origin, but their primary identification is with the United States; many of them have been in this country nearly their entire lives and have received most of their education from kindergarten through twelfth grade here; and

Whereas, Undocumented immigrant high school graduates, who have grown up in New York, include honor roll students, student leaders, talented athletes, gifted artists, and aspiring professionals; and

Whereas, Nevertheless, because of the numerous legal and financial obstacles confronting undocumented students, many are unable to afford to attend college because they are ineligible for federal higher education financial assistance programs; and

Whereas, It is estimated that only between 5 and 10 percent of undocumented high school graduates go on to college; and

Whereas, Despite the fact that many undocumented immigrant children are raised in the United States, attend local schools, and identify with American culture, existing immigration laws provide no legal avenues

for these children to rectify their status; although many of these children were brought to the United States at a young age, they face unique barriers to higher education, they are unable to legally work here, and they live in constant fear of detection by immigration authorities; and

Whereas, Immigrant children should be afforded the opportunity to apply for legal status and to continue their education; they should be able to contribute and live in the country where they have spent significant portions of their lives; by encouraging these children to pursue higher education and gain legal status, the United States will both strengthen its economic foundation by creating a more educated workforce and introduce justice and fairness to our immigration system; and

Whereas, The Development, Relief, and Education for Alien Minors (“DREAM”) Act was first introduced in on March 6, 2007, as S. 774, by Senator Richard Durbin, a Democrat from Illinois; on September 19, 2007, Senator Durbin introduced the DREAM Act of 2007 as an amendment, S.A. 2919, to the defense authorization bill, H.R. 1585; on March 26, 2009, Senator Durbin introduced the DREAM Act of 2009 as S. 729; and

Whereas, Among other provisions, the DREAM Act provides a six-year path to permanent resident status following high school graduation for individuals who were brought to the United States as children and have lived in the United States for more than five years; to qualify for permanent residency and obtain a green card, individuals would have to demonstrate good moral character and within the six-year period graduate obtain a degree from an institution of higher education, complete two years towards a bachelor’s degree or higher degree, or serve at least two years in the United States military; and

Whereas, The comprehensive immigration reform debate has largely ignored the plight of undocumented children who predominantly have grown up and received much of their primary and secondary education in this country; without a mechanism for legalization, these children are seldom able to continue their education beyond high school due to the cost of higher education, cannot work legally in the United States, and therefore cannot effectively apply the education attained thus far; and

Whereas, In the absence of comprehensive immigration reform, young people should not be required to put their lives on hold while Congress debates the issues of what such reform should entail; and

Whereas, If enacted, the DREAM Act would allow thousands of eligible undocumented students to graduate from high school with meaningful opportunities for advancement; now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Council of the City of New York urges the United States Congress to pass the Development, Relief, and Education for Alien Minors Act of 2009, which would provide a path to citizenship for aspiring immigrant youth who were brought to the United States as young children.

JPV/JEB
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