

April 3, 2009

Dear Senator Durbin:

On behalf of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB), I write to express our support for S. 729, the Development, Relief, and Education for Alien Minors Act (DREAM Act). This legislation would make a difference in the lives of undocumented youth who were brought to the United States by their parents and now, because of their lack of legal status, face obstacles to their future. By removing such barriers, the DREAM Act permits immigrant students to pursue a promising future through college education or military service.

Those who would benefit from the DREAM Act are talented, intelligent, and dedicated young persons who know only the United States as their home. They can become some of the future leaders of our country, provided we are wise enough to provide them the opportunity to pursue their dreams.

Under the DREAM Act, deserving immigrant youth can adjust to permanent resident status provided that they entered the United States before age sixteen, have been physically present in the United States for not less than five years, demonstrated good moral character, have no criminal record and do not threaten national security, and have earned their high school diploma. This bill also offers students a fair opportunity to earn U.S. citizenship if they commit to and complete at least two years of college or two years of honorable service in the military.

Importantly, this legislation will apply to students in both public and private education, including those attending Catholic schools. It will also place a college degree within their reach by removing restrictions currently in law that limit states from offering them in-state tuition at public colleges and universities.

It is important to note that these young persons entered the United States with their parents at a young age, and therefore did not enter without inspection on their own volition.

The DREAM Act represents a practical, fair, and compassionate solution for thousands of young persons in our nation who simply want to reach their God-given potential and contribute to the well-being of our nation. We urge Congress to pass this measure as soon as possible.

Thank you for introducing this important piece of legislation. We look forward to working with you until it becomes law.

Sincerely,  
Most Reverend Bishop John C. Wester  
Bishop of Salt Lake City  
Chairman, USCCB Committee on Migration