



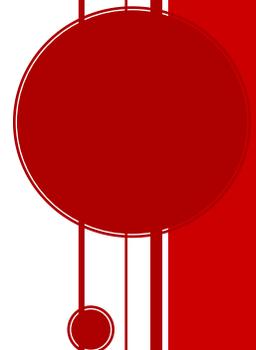
UNITED UNIVERSITY PROFESSIONS

*Testimony on the Development,
Relief and Education Act for Minors
(DREAM Act)*

Presented To:
Senate Democratic Conference
DREAM Act Forum

*Presented By:
Frederick E. Kowal, Ph.D.
President*

5/28/2014



United University Professions

Testimony on the Development, Relief and Education Act for Minors (DREAM Act)

I want to thank the Senate Democratic Conference for holding a public forum on the Development, Relief and Education Act for Minors (DREAM Act). I am Frederick E. Kowal, President of United University Professions (UUP). We are the nation's largest higher education union, representing more than 35,000 academic and professional faculty and staff at SUNY four-year campuses statewide.

United University Professions fully supports the New York DREAM Act that expands tuition assistance awards and other financial aid programs and scholarships to undocumented students. UUP, along with coalition partners from NYSUT, CUNY, SUNY's community colleges and NYPIRG, have supported and advocated for the enactment of the DREAM Act as part of our joint legislative platform. UUP believes that extending eligibility for state financial aid to undocumented college students will yield social and economic benefits that will have a positive impact on our students, campuses, and our communities.

There are thousands of students in New York state who entered the U.S. as children and have lived the majority of their lives in America. Yet, they are identified as undocumented based solely on the status of their parents. Many of these undocumented students have attended New York schools from kindergarten through 12th grade. Unfortunately, once they graduate high school,

they are left to fend for themselves if they wish to pursue a higher education. For some low-income undocumented students, these tremendous financial obstacles prevent them from even enrolling in college. Others are unable to attend college full-time, and many of these students lack the financial means to complete the courses necessary to graduate. It does not matter how driven or smart these students are, these DREAMers are unable to obtain the financial assistance afforded to other students facing similar financial struggles—simply because they are the children of undocumented immigrants.

All too often people believe that they can live in a bubble, and that somehow, the lives of others have little or no impact on their own. I am here today to burst that bubble. We are all connected in this. Whether or not these deserving students have access to affordable higher education—will have a long-term impact on campuses, communities, and the state.

Often, the DREAMers are some of the most hard-working, intelligent, and culturally diverse students that our members have the privilege of teaching. The classroom thrives on the sharing of diverse ideas and experiences. Allowing these financial hurdles to remain in place prevents these students from enrolling in our colleges and stunts the potential classroom learning experience for all students. This legislation would enhance diversity by increasing access to college for these undocumented students.

Without financial assistance for college, it is difficult for many undocumented students to find regular employment or decent housing.

Increasing college access for undocumented students would encourage more of these students to graduate high school and enroll in college. A quality higher education will provide these students with better job opportunities, higher wages, and a path to a better life. Studies have shown that the median income of a student who earns a four-year degree is \$25,000 greater than that of a high school graduate. With a college education, these individuals will be able to contribute more to their families and their communities. In addition, increased education rates correspond with decreased crime rates and decreased spending on public assistance programs. An educated workforce benefits the entire community.

A college degree also opens doors and provides opportunity for personal growth—it shapes young adults into responsible members of society. A higher education will change the course of life for these young adults and positively impact the communities they live in. For hundreds of years, education has been the great equalizer. It is still the great equalizer today. In today's society, a higher education is necessary to compete, to thrive, and to provide for one's family. The DREAM Act will provide these students an opportunity to have access to an affordable higher education, to obtain a job, and be productive citizens.

At the state level, the value of a higher education cannot be overstated. As the number of jobs that require a higher education continues to increase, New York state will need to meet that demand. That's why it is so important for

the state to invest in the education of all of its youth. Thanks to the May 2013 state Comptroller's report, we know that the relatively small investment in the DREAM Act would yield economic benefits for the state. The state generally collects more tax revenue from college-educated individuals. On average, the state obtains about \$3,900 more in taxes from a person with a four-year degree when compared to a high school graduate. Decreased crime rates, decreased reliance in public assistance programs, increased revenue source—the bottom line is that a better-educated workforce benefits New York's economy.

In closing, I'd like to thank you for this opportunity and share with you a quote that serves as a reminder of the importance of cultivating the potential that exists in each and every one of us. John F. Kennedy said: "Our progress as a nation can be no swifter than our progress in education. The human mind is our fundamental resource." We cannot allow this fundamental resource to be wasted, simply because the parents of these students are undocumented. Investing in their potential, their education, benefits everyone. It benefits our campuses, communities, and all of New York State.

Thank you for your time today.