

AFL-CIO Executive Council Statement

Washington, DC
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MAKING THE DREAM A REALITY

Every year, thousands of our nation's brightest and best students graduating high school find that the path to decent jobs and the doors of higher education and the military are essentially shut tight against them for one reason alone: They lack legal immigration status because as young children, they were brought to this country by their parents.

These children have grown up in the United States, attended local schools, and have demonstrated a sustained commitment to succeed in the educational system, but immigration laws provide no avenue for these students to become legal residents. Instead of being allowed to continue to excel in college as they have in high school, these promising children will be forced into a job where they will have to either lie about their status, or work off the books. Neither outcome is just, nor is it good for our society.

It is ironic that at the same time that business is calling for immigration reform that makes it easier for foreign high skilled workers to come to the US, America is sending some of our best and brightest into the underground economy. Our nation has already made an investment in the education of these students. Forcing them into the underground economy is an extensive loss of human capital.

The Development Relief and Education for Alien Minors (DREAM) Act, would remedy this situation by allowing undocumented students who have lived in the United States for at least five years and have graduated from high school or received a graduate equivalency diploma (GED) to legalize their immigration status through pursuing a college education or serving in the U.S. military.

The DREAM Act would provide these hard-working immigrant students the chance to obtain conditional legal status, along with an opportunity to go to college, serve in our military, and become the productive, tax-paying citizens that they have worked so hard to become. Access to higher education will allow these immigrants to make even greater contributions to our society, and decrease the numbers of those forced to live in poverty.

Undocumented students have waited many years for this legislation to become law, yet have never had the support and political will needed from Congressional Leadership to succeed. The time to act is now.

The AFL-CIO calls on members of Congress to take immediate steps to pass the DREAM Act in 2010 as down payment to Comprehensive Immigration Reform.