



## New York DREAM Act (A.2597 / S.2378) Information Sheet

### What is the New York DREAM Act?

The New York DREAM Act would allow undocumented students who meet in-state tuition requirements to access state financial aid and scholarships for higher education. It would also open 529 tuition savings accounts to all New York youth, and establish a DREAM Fund Commission to raise private funds for a college scholarship program for children of immigrants.

### Why is it important?

An estimated 146,000 youth in New York who have been educated in New York public schools are currently ineligible to receive financial aid under federal and state law.<sup>1</sup> Of the more than 4,500 undocumented students who graduate from New York high schools every year, only 5-10% pursue a college degree due to tremendous financial obstacles.<sup>2</sup>

Although many have attended New York schools from kindergarten through 12th grades, they are left in limbo after graduating high school, ineligible to receive federal tuition assistance, scholarships, grants or loans. New York, as a state with one of the largest immigrant populations in the U.S, must do what Washington D.C. has failed to do and equip these students with the tools that will help them succeed in their higher education pursuits. A decade ago, New York showed leadership by allowing all students who graduate from a high school in New York to pay in-state tuition rates at CUNY and SUNY. The New York DREAM Act would be the next step, extending state financial aid to all students who meet the requirements for the Tuition Assistance Program (TAP).

California, Texas, and New Mexico have passed state-level DREAM Acts allowing undocumented students to access state funded financial aid, and New York should join them in passing legislation that is good for our community, good for our youth, and good for our economy.

### Those who benefit from the bill must meet the following requirements:

- Have attended a NY high school for at least 2 years and graduated, or obtained a NY GED
- Enroll in a college or university in the state of New York within 5 years of graduating
- Affirm they will apply for legal immigration status as soon as they are able to do so.
- Meet Higher Education Services Corporation's requirements for TAP
  - Be enrolled as a full-time student taking 12 or more credits per semester
  - Declare a major by the 2nd year of a 2-year program or 3rd year of a 4-year program
  - Maintain a C average
  - Be charged at least \$200 tuition per year
  - Meet income eligibility requirements

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<sup>1</sup> Batalova, Jeanne and Margie McHugh. 2010. "DREAM vs. Reality: An Analysis of Potential DREAM Act Beneficiaries." Washington, DC. Migration Policy Institute. <http://www.migrationpolicy.org/pubs/DREAM-Insight-July2010.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> Immigration Policy Center. 2011. "The DREAM Act: Creating Opportunities for Immigrant Students and Supporting the U.S. Economy," <http://www.immigrationpolicy.org/just-facts/dream-act>. The estimate of 4,500 undocumented high school graduates per year is created by taking the share of all undocumented youth estimated to live in NYS State (7%) times the number of undocumented youth estimated to graduate from a US high school every year (65,000).



## **Myths and Facts about the New York DREAM Act (A.2597 / S.2378)**

### **Myth 1: *The Bill would provide an incentive for people to come here illegally.***

**Fact:** The New York DREAM Act offers no reason for people to enter the country illegally. It does not legalize students -- only federal reform can do that. The NY DREAM Act also does not provide benefits for immigrants who are not already here. It requires students to graduate from a New York high school or obtain a GED in New York to qualify for state financial aid.

### **Myth 2: *It will be a fiscal burden and increase the strain on state educational systems.***

**Fact:** The New York DREAM Act would make money for taxpayers. State and local taxpayers are already investing in the education of undocumented students in elementary and secondary school. Continuing to invest in NY youth, so that they can attend college, will bring a strong return on investment by allowing youth to develop their careers. The annual cost of the NY DREAM Act is less than 2 percent of the current TAP budget. Workers in New York with a college education pay \$3,900 more in state and local taxes every year compared to workers with a high-school diploma.<sup>3</sup>

### **Myth 3: *This bill is funded by US citizens' tax payments and benefits only undocumented youth***

**Fact:** Undocumented immigrants pay payroll taxes, income taxes, and property taxes (directly, or through their landlords), just like U.S. citizens. The Institute for Taxation and Economic Policy estimates that undocumented immigrants paid \$662.4 million in taxes to NY State in 2010.<sup>4</sup>

### **Myth 4: *Documented New Yorkers will lose spots in college.***

**Fact:** The small number of students who will be impacted by the New York DREAM Act is not significant enough to affect the opportunities of others. The colleges and universities in the 12 states that allow undocumented students to pay in-state tuition have not experienced a large influx of undocumented youth that have taken seats away from U.S. citizen students. Further, TAP is an entitlement program, which means that all youth who qualify and apply are able to obtain financial aid. Extending this program to undocumented students does not affect other students' access to TAP or to higher education.

### **Myth 5: *The NY DREAM Act is a form of amnesty.***

**Fact:** The New York DREAM Act does not provide amnesty or change immigration law. The focus of the bill is to expand access to higher education for undocumented students who live in New York and have graduated from a New York high school. These students are here to stay and we should provide them with the tools to succeed fully and contribute to the State's economy.

### **Myth 6: *The federal government will fix our immigration problems. We do not need to act.***

**Fact:** Current proposals for federal immigration reform would not grant financial aid to undocumented students. The Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program has already granted work authorization to many undocumented youth in New York State. Assisting undocumented students to obtain a college education allows the State to immediately capitalize on professional skills and higher tax payments as soon as immigrant youth obtain work authorization through DACA or any future federal legalization.

<sup>3</sup> Fiscal Policy Institute. 2013. "The New York State DREAM Legislation: A Strong Return on Investment." <http://fiscalpolicy.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/02/NYS-DREAM-legislation-ROI.pdf>

<sup>4</sup> Immigration Policy Center. 2011. "Unauthorized Immigrants Pay Taxes, Too: Estimates of the State and Local Taxes Paid by Unauthorized Immigrant Households," [http://www.immigrationpolicy.org/sites/default/files/docs/Tax\\_Contributions\\_by\\_Unauthorized\\_Immigrants\\_041811.pdf](http://www.immigrationpolicy.org/sites/default/files/docs/Tax_Contributions_by_Unauthorized_Immigrants_041811.pdf).