

STATEMENT OF
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BEFORE THE

SUBCOMMITTEE ON IMMIGRATION, REFUGEES AND
BORDER SECURITY
COMMITTEE ON THE JUDICIARY
UNITED STATES SENATE

AT A HEARING ENTITLED
“S. 952, DEVELOPMENT, RELIEF, AND EDUCATION FOR
ALIEN MINORS (DREAM) ACT OF 2011”

PRESENTED
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Chairman Durbin, Ranking Member Cornyn, and members of the Subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to submit this testimony. I am grateful that the subcommittee is holding a hearing on this important issue. On behalf of the Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities, I submit this statement to express my full support of S. 952, the Development, Relief and Education for Alien Minors (DREAM) Act of 2011.

The Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities (HACU) represents a membership of more than 400 institutions, including the nation's 281 Hispanic-Serving Institutions (HSIs) and nearly 200 other two- and four-year colleges and universities committed to Hispanic higher education. HACU was established in 1986 with a founding membership of eighteen institutions. Member institutions in the United States are home to more than two thirds of all Hispanic college students.

HACU has been invested in advocating for the DREAM Act for many years, particularly last year when the legislation passed the House but failed to pass in the Senate. HACU led a national Act on the DREAM Coalition to launch a comprehensive advocacy effort for the passage of the DREAM Act. HACU was joined by more than 20 national organizations and collegiate associations in the effort.

As you know, the DREAM Act has been introduced in every Congress since 2001. S. 952 addresses the situation of undocumented students who have lived in the U.S. and graduated from U.S. high schools but find themselves stalled by their immigration status and limited in pursuing a higher education or serving in the U.S. armed forces.

An estimated 65,000 undocumented students who have lived in the United States for five years or longer graduate from U.S. high schools each year. Of these, only 5-10% are estimated to continue on to college while 75% of their classmates will go on. Many of these students were brought to the U.S. as very small children and know no other home than the U.S., having only distant connections with the country of their birth. Like other immigrants, these students are high-achievers: many graduate at the top of their class. The barriers they face to continuing their

education and finding legal employment represent losses not only to these individuals but to the nation that will not benefit from their talent and energy.

Our country continues to struggle economically. If enacted, the DREAM Act would help the economy. Not only are the direct costs of implementing the DREAM Act low, but the longer term economic benefits are high, both for the students and for the nation. Workers with only a high-school diploma generally earn less and have a higher unemployment rate than those with a bachelor's degree. If DREAM Act students are given a chance, they will contribute to our economy by putting their skills to use, securing better jobs and paying more in taxes. In fact, students are likely to stay in the state where they were raised, thereby paying for their education and contributing to that state's economy.

Some argue that the DREAM Act is nothing more than amnesty and that it encourages illegal immigration by rewarding law-breakers. On the contrary, the DREAM Act focuses on students who are here through no decision of their own and often with no connections to any other country. To be eligible for the DREAM Act benefits, students must have already shown themselves to have good moral character and good academic performance. Having overcome the many disadvantages that result from undocumented status, these students have already demonstrated a remarkable ability to succeed despite huge obstacles and have demonstrated their loyalty and dedication to the United States.

As more and more states are enacting legislation to deal with the challenges of our broken immigration system, it is time for Congress to pass the DREAM Act and help direct states to sensible and humane immigration legislation.

Thank you for this opportunity to submit this testimony. I thank the Subcommittee for their attention to the DREAM Act.