

## Testimony

Hello, my name is José Cortez and I have been residing in Pennsylvania for 13 years. I have graduate from high school and I just recently completed my sophomore year of college. At some point in everyone's life, someone has asked the simple question of "what do you want to be when you grow up?". I was asked that same question when I was 6 sitting in my 2<sup>nd</sup> grade classroom, and I responded with wanting to be someone who can helps others. At the time I didn't realize that what I wanted to achieve and who I wanted to be would be limited by my immigration status.

Every year there are undocumented students who attend high school and see that there is little possibility that college is a future for them. They have the grades, the willpower and strength but there is a barrier that keeps them from pursuing higher education. There are students who have been living in Pennsylvania for most of their life, involving themselves with the community who face doubts everyday about what their future is. I had the same doubts too, all of the people I knew were applying to colleges and getting accepted, they had a road set for them.

I did my best to fit in, took the SAT and pretended that everything was alright even though in reality my life was far from that. Even if I could get into a college how would I pay for it, is what I asked myself knowing that due to my immigration status I would have to pay the out-of-state tuition amount, which was almost 3 times as much the in-state tuition fee for colleges I was interested in. I felt discouraged from continuing on, feeling like I would never reach my dream of helping others. When graduation was approaching I still had no decision of where to go, until one day I decided to apply to a private college. This private college, accepted me, integrated me and offered me an education that I will always be thankful for.

I consider Pennsylvania my home, the place where I made the best of memories, and friends. Like me there are other undocumented students who are willing to strive for success, to work hard day and night to accomplish their dream and career they said when they were asked what they wanted to be. The Pennsylvania DREAM Act would help students reach their goals and give hope that there is still a future in place for them by allowing them to pay the in-state tuition price for public colleges and recognize the time they have lived in Pennsylvania. I along with other students want to continue an education that will provide a brighter future, while at the same time giving back to the state.

To promote the PA DREAM Act is to promote equality because there will be more access to higher education for the youth that has already been contributing to the state. It is also an investment, because the future people who will be affected by this bill could very well be the next entrepreneurs, small business owners or inventors and leaders this state and country need. The only thing left to do is to give us a chance, an opportunity to help ensure the continuing enrichment and growth of Pennsylvania.