

May 14, 2013

The Honorable Mike Folmer

Re: Support S.B. 713 the Pennsylvania Dream Act

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee,

My name is Edith Ramirez and I am undocumented. I'm a high school graduate from Kensington International Business, a neighborhood school in north Philadelphia. I graduated with a 3.7 GPA but unfortunately I wasn't able to get a scholarship, my only option after I graduated was community college but I can't afford the international rates that as undocumented I would have to pay.

I am currently working to save money for my college education. I live with only my mom and my two brothers and I have to help with the house expenses. It is just too hard for me to afford college right now. I believe that the Pennsylvania Dream Act will help me achieve higher education. Education should be accessible to everybody regardless of economic status or immigration status. Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,
Edith Ramirez

13 May 2013
The Honorable Senator Mike Folmer
Education Committee

Re: Support for Bill SB713, Pennsylvania DREAM Act

Chairman and Members of the Committee:

I am a 20-year-old undocumented student who grew up in Pennsylvania thinking that I regardless of how hard I worked, I had no academic or professional future. Before my junior year in high school, it was never difficult for me to be a good student. I genuinely enjoyed learning, and I also understood it was my responsibility to do well since my parents had sacrificed their lives in Mexico to give me a better life here. But when my friends started applying to colleges, I realized I did not have the same opportunities. Virtually every school was out of my reach because I could not afford a single one. But when I was ready to give up, my high school councilor suggested that I apply to privately funded colleges, and thankfully I was accepted to the University of Pennsylvania. What I expected to be one of the happiest moments of my life turned the most bittersweet as I saw many undocumented students graduate with no prospects of a higher education.

I urge you to support the Pennsylvania DREAM Act so that those students who were unable to continue their education have access to in-state tuition rates, and so that all those who have yet to graduate know that they have options for their future. No student should ever feel like their efforts are not worth opportunities, and no student should ever fall into depression as a result. This bill represents so much for so many students in this state, not only those who made it through high school but also those who dropped out and have a GED instead. Education should be a possibility for everyone in Pennsylvania regardless of immigration status, after all, it is human right.

Thank you for this opportunity to testify in support of the Pennsylvania DREAM Act,

Sheila Quintana

May 14, 2013

The Honorable Mike Folmer
Re: Support S.B. 713 the Pennsylvania Dream Act

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee,

Thank you for this opportunity to submit a written testimony for the Senate Education Committee's hearing on Senate bill 713, the Pennsylvania Dream Act. My name is Fernanda Marroquin and I am undocumented and unafraid. I migrated to the United States from Peru with my parents and siblings in 2000 when I was 11 years old. We were forced to migrate because there were no jobs and no way for my parents to raise us in Peru. Although we came with a tourist visa, it expired six months after our arrival to the U.S. I did not know what being undocumented meant until I was a junior in High School when I faced several barriers in applying to college, getting my driver's license, traveling, etc. I was afraid of being separated from my family through deportation and ashamed of my immigration status. I felt like my life had just stopped, I hit a wall that was very difficult to overcome.

I graduated from high school in 2007 but had to take a year off in order to babysit and gather enough money to take a few classes at my local community college. I was incredibly frustrated with my situation and became depressed at the lack of opportunities I saw for myself and my family. Many college counselors would tell me I could not go to college and did not know how the process of an undocumented person going to college looked like. When I enrolled in Montgomery County Community College, I was forced to pay as an international student even though I have been living in Pennsylvania since I was 12 years old. I had to pay approximately \$1,000 per class plus the cost of books out of my pocket, without any financial support. I am now 23 years old and barely a junior since I could only take a few classes per semester due to the high cost of school.

It is unfair that I, along with other students who have grown up in Pennsylvania, have to pay out of state rates. We deserve equal access to education and our immigration status should not stop us from reaching our goals and those of our families. My parents are courageous and they came to this country to give my siblings and me a better future and access to education. It is not okay for the undocumented youth of Pennsylvania to feel frustrated and like there is no future for them. As undocumented youth, we often go through mental health issues due to our status, deportations, and the injustice we experience within our communities. The Pennsylvania Dream Act would provide undocumented youth the opportunity to pay in-state tuition rates at public institutions of higher education. It is a common sense bill because it would not only provide relief for undocumented youth, but it would benefit the state of Pennsylvania to have an educated workforce. I urge you to please vote YES on this crucial bill. Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,
Fernanda Marroquin
DreamActivist Pennsylvania

May 14, 2013

The Honorable Mike Folmer

Re: Support S.B. 713 the Pennsylvania Dream Act

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee,

My name is Jose Gonzalez, and I firmly believe that the Pennsylvania DREAM Act should pass this year. As an undocumented student myself, I struggled to find affordable options for college despite my impeccable academic and extra-curricular record. In my mind, I had two feasible options; I could attend a community college that I could afford with a full-time job on the side and let my academics suffer, or I could get into an Ivy League university that would fund my education despite my lack of a nine-digit social security number. Fortunately, after a stressful, frustrating, and uncertain senior year, I was accepted into the University of Pennsylvania with a very generous financial aid package.

No student should feel the pressure and the uncertainty regarding his future as I did four years ago when I was in high school. Access to higher education should be equitable and fair for all students regardless of where they were born or what their current immigration status is. Furthermore, the state of Pennsylvania, and the United States as a whole, benefits immensely from having an educated population, so why place unnecessary obstacles in the academic paths of our students? Countless studies show that the passage of tuition equity bills lower high school dropout rates, increase revenues at colleges and universities, and overall improve the standard of living of all community members. It is time that Pennsylvania join the other states that have already recognized the many benefits that passing a tuition equity bill brings, not only to the undocumented students who benefit directly from them, but also to the larger community.

Sincerely,
Jose Gonzalez