

My name is Jorge Salazar; I am the community organizer for the Pennsylvania Immigration and Citizenship Coalition.

I am writing to express my support for the Pennsylvania Dream Act (SB713). In 1989 my family arrived in Philadelphia, I was 7 years old at the time. My family came here looking for a better future and opportunities that wouldn't have been available to us in Bolivia. Like many in the past we were motivated by the promise of the American Dream. Thinking that by working hard and applying yourself in school and in your community, you could find some measure of success.

I grew up loving the Flyers, back when Eric Lindros played; I collected Marvel comic books with my friends, I didn't see any difference between myself and my classmates, and neither did they. I had attended a magnet middle school, and magnet high school, excelling in my classes and obtaining excellent grades. However, when I was in twelfth grade and graduating from George Washington Carver High School of Engineering and Science, a magnet school in Philadelphia, I learned that our family was considered to be different. I grew up thinking I was no different from my friends and classmates. You see my parents never told us about our immigration problems, trying to protect us like any parent would. So at the time when most of my classmates were looking into colleges, I found myself in a deep state of depression, trying to adjust with a new fearful reality where I came to realize I could be separated from my family at any point. I lacked a 9 digit number, I was undocumented.

Now I see a chance to help my community, and I must stand up and express my whole hearted support for the Pennsylvania Dream Act. I don't want anyone else to go through the trials and tribulations I had to experience. I do not want to see anyone's dream deferred, I do not want to see students with potential feeling that they shouldn't even try because they see no light at the end of the tunnel. The Pennsylvania Dream Act provides an opportunity for students who are in the same situation I was in several years ago to achieve a measure of self improvement that would not only benefit themselves, but their communities. Had a law similar to the Pennsylvania Dream act passed when I was in high school, it would have made a huge difference in my life. It would have open the doors to an affordable high quality education.