



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Andrea Stewart-Cousins

Press Release: Senate Democratic Conference Members Hold Public Forum On The New York State DREAM Act

ANDREA STEWART-COUSINS May 29, 2014

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Albany, NY - The Senate Democratic Conference today held a public forum on the New York State DREAM Act. This legislation will would provide access to state-funded financial aid (TAP) and scholarships to qualifying undocumented youth as they seek to attend higher education institutions. Forum participants were provided testimony by fiscal and education experts, as well as undocumented youth who would qualify for education aid if the DREAM Act passed into law.

“Every New Yorker, regardless of documentation, deserves the right to pursue a higher education and to earn financial aid based on merit,” Democratic Conference Leader Andrea Stewart-Cousins said. “For our state to prosper and succeed in the new economy we need a well-educated workforce. We have a responsibility to ensure the next generation of New Yorkers have access to an affordable path for a higher education, regardless of their immigration status.

New York State Comptroller Thomas P. DiNapoli said, “Passing the Dream Act is an investment in New York’s economic future. By supporting young people who want to pursue a college education, we are making our state and workforce stronger and smarter and better prepared for the challenges of tomorrow.”

Participants in the Senate Democratic Conference public forum discussed the financial and educational benefits of enacting the New York State DREAM Act. Once passed by the State Senate, this legislation will provide access to state financial aid programs, including grants, loans and scholarships for undocumented youth in New York.

Dream Act sponsor, Senator José Peralta, said, “We have an opportunity in New York to build on the growing national consensus, among business, labor and leaders of both political parties, around the need and obvious economic benefits of doing right by our young people. We see that burgeoning momentum in the four states that have already passed versions of the DREAM Act, as well as locally, on the editorial pages of newspapers as different as the Daily News, The New York Times and New York Post. At some point, hopefully soon, politics, common sense and human decency will conspire to make the DREAM Act a reality in New York.”

Senate Latino Conference Chair Adriano Espaillat, said, “We are closer than ever to making the DREAM Act a reality, and ensuring all New Yorkers have the chance to succeed through

hard work. We have to keep the pressure up and make sure this key civil rights issue stays on the agenda. The Senate vote taken earlier this year was a heartbreaking disappointment for the nearly 4,000 New Yorkers who graduate high school each year but can't obtain an education because of their immigration status - but it proved we are on the cusp of getting this passed. The DREAM Act is a defining issue of our time, and we can't accept defeat."

Senator Bill Perkins said, "The DREAM Act—at its core essence—is a human, civil and equal rights issue. Further, it really is about fidelity to the history and legacy of the State of New York as the immigrant-dreamer capital of the world. When you analyze the well-founded public policy imperatives behind it—you find the concrete reasons to pass it are universal. This Public Forum is another purposeful step to ensuring that the noble aspirations of these courageous and inspiring DREAMers are deferred no longer."

Barbara Bowen, President of the Professional Staff Congress, the union representing faculty at the City University of New York, said, "New York State was built by immigrants, our own parents and grandparents. Now that immigration policy is far less liberal, the children of the current generation of immigrants are in danger of losing out on the chance for a college education, a chance that many of us depended on. The undocumented young people who attend CUNY and aspire to attend CUNY are passionate, courageous students. We need their voices in our classrooms. The state needs the knowledge and energy they will offer as college graduates. It's time for New York to reclaim its legacy of welcoming new immigrants and pass the DREAM Act."

Colin Chellman, PhD, Associate Dean for Institutional and Policy Research at the City University of New York, said, "Undocumented students at CUNY are generally well-prepared for college, but the evidence shows that financial hardship impedes their college success. Undocumented students earn higher GPAs and complete more of the courses they attempt than students who are citizens. They persist at higher rates and have higher 2- and 3-year

graduation rates from associate programs. However, at this point in their academic careers, we find evidence that the cost of college – the lack of financial aid – begins to slow their academic progress: 4- and 6-year graduation rates from baccalaureate programs drop to levels at or below those of students who are citizens.”

David Dyssegaard Kallick, Director of the Fiscal Policy Institute’s Immigration Research Initiative, said, “The DREAM Act will provide a very real boost to several thousand students who by earning a college degree are doing one of the best things they can to contribute to the state’s business climate and tax base. Holding these students back because of their parents’ actions is pretty hard to justify, and certainly makes no economic or fiscal sense.”

Senator Martin Malavé Dilan said, “Equal access to education is a fundamental Democratic principle. The Dream Act ensures that the opportunity and tools to fully realize the American Dream are available to all. The fight for this important measure in New York will go on until we truly have equal access for all to the state’s colleges and universities.”

Senator Brad Hoylman said, “Today’s public forum highlighted the immediate need to pass the Dream Act to grant thousands of New York State undocumented public school students the opportunity to attend college. Experts agree that this legislation will put students on the path to being greater contributors to our state at a very small cost to taxpayers. Without the Dream Act, undocumented students will continue to face steep odds to join the workforce, and by not acting today to help them we end up undermining the future of our city and state economy.”

Senator Kevin Parker said, “In March of this year, the Dream Act died on the Senate Floor despite the fact that New York’s greatest strength has historically been its vibrant immigrant community. Every member of the Senate is descended from immigrants who came to New York because of our historic values that welcome immigrants and make them

full partners in our success. Yet even though New Americans, especially youth, are the past, present, and future of our great state, the Republican Majority Coalition refused to vote for this important legislation. Our moral position as a state has always been to support family unity and the drive to become educated and succeed economically. At its core, that is all the DREAM Act is really about. It is about, once again, reconfirming our core values as New Yorkers, which is why we must pass this vital bill.”

Senator Gustavo Rivera said, “The Dream Act will give young immigrant New Yorkers - many of whom have grown-up in our State and have been successful in our education system - access to the resources they need to attain a higher education. The passage of this bill is an essential step forward in ensuring that all New Yorkers, regardless of their immigration status, have access to a quality education and the ability to build a brighter future. I will continue to work with my colleagues to move this legislation forward and pass it this year.”

Senator Daniel Squadron said, “A core part of who we are is the idea that generations of immigrants, with hard work and determination, could build a better future for themselves, and their children. The DREAM ACT would bring us a step closer to ensuring that those who want to educate themselves and climb the ladder, have that chance. This forum will help move the facts forward and, hopefully, pass the DREAM Act into law.”