



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Jose Peralta

## Senator Jose Peralta at the CUNY DREAMers graduation ceremony: “Moments like this motivate you and keep you going”

JOSE PERALTA June 9, 2015

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In a very emotional ceremony, 2015 CUNY DREAMers celebrated their First Annual CUNY DREAMers Convocation titled “Lifting the Barriers to Education” on Friday, June 5th. Held at the CUNY Graduate Center, a representation of the graduates told the audience about the financial and social hurdles they had to overcome to finally receive their college degrees.

In light of their efforts and struggles, State Senator Jose Peralta (D-East Elmhurst) presented them with a proclamation during the event. Senator Peralta, the lead sponsor of the DREAM Act in the State Senate, said he has been inspired by the DREAMers, and promised to keep on fighting until “we right this wrong” and the DREAM Act is passed. The proclamation stated, “it is right and just to recognize the accomplishments and ability of CUNY DREAMers program graduates as they overcome the financial hurdles placed before them as undocumented students who are ineligible for tuition assistance program (TAP) aid... I, New York State Senator Jose Peralta, recognize the CUNY DREAMers 2015 graduates for their hard work and dedication to building a better future for themselves.”

The DREAM Act would make undocumented students who arrived in the United States as minors eligible to participate in the State's Tuition Assistance Program. The New York DREAM Act Coalition estimates that only between five to ten percent of high school graduates who would be covered by the Act pursue college degrees, largely because of financial obstacles.

“Moments like this motivate you and keep you going,” said Senator Peralta after he heard stories from graduates at the inaugural ceremony held at the Kelly Skylight Room of the CUNY Graduate Center in Manhattan. “The time will come when the DREAM Act is a reality.”

Senator Peralta, himself a graduate of Queens College, said that passing the DREAM Act “is an investment in the future” as a college graduate typically pays about \$4,000 more in state taxes every year than a New Yorker without a degree. He told graduates that it was at the Queens College campus that he discovered his “passion for politics and public service.”

Jay Hershenson, CUNY Senior Vice-Chancellor, also took part on the celebration, showing his support for the college students. Approximately 900 DREAMers graduated this year from

the CUNY system.

During the DREAMers' graduation, the New York DREAM Act Coalition, in collaboration with the New York Immigration Coalition, unveiled a petition urging Governor Andrew Cuomo, Assembly Speaker Carl Heastie, and Senate Majority Leader John Flanagan to pass the DREAM Act. Senator Peralta was the first person to sign the petition which implores “all of you [Cuomo, Heastie and Flanagan] to use your power and influence to advocate for the passage of the DREAM Act.”

“We are honored to join these remarkable students and their families at the inaugural CUNY DREAMers convocation and extend a sincere congratulations to all!” said Steven Choi, executive director of the New York Immigration Coalition. “It is no small feat that this year, 900 DREAMers from CUNY will be able to make their dreams of graduating from college a reality. We now must assure that every DREAMer has the chance to accomplish this dream. This is why we, alongside the NYS DREAM Act Coalition, launch a petition to continue to push Governor Cuomo, Speaker Heastie, and Majority Leader Flanagan to do what is right – pass the New York State DREAM Act.”