

Idaho Immigrant Student's DREAM Act Op-Ed

I'm exactly the kind of high-school student you'd expect to send off to college in the fall. I love studying and my grade point average is high – almost 4.0. I'm a member of the National Honor Society and the state president of the Future Hispanic Leaders of America. Last year, during my summer break I attended the Youth Leadership Institute to learn more about how to serve my community. For my senior project, I am spearheading efforts to establish a one-day conference for parents and youth. During my spring break this year, I volunteered for a soccer academy for children so they can have something fun, challenging, and positive to do during their break.

But the odds are that I won't be able to go to college, even though I really want to.

That's because of my immigration status, which means that I am not eligible for the student loans I need for college. I would really like to become a legal resident so I can continue my education, but right now our immigration system has no pathway for me to do that.

When I was sixteen years old, I left Mexico and came to the United States. The only thing I wanted was to study and make a good future for myself and my family. To help my family make ends meet, during my vacations, I worked in the orchards pruning apple trees. Since I was born in a city, I didn't know anything about farms or orchards – I never imagined I would do this kind of work! But I did.

There are other young people just like me who are working hard and helping their families, and who have dreams of studying and making better lives. I respect and admire the people who work hard in the fields to put food on our tables – they don't get the recognition or the rights they deserve. But that work shouldn't be the only option for us.

Because of complications within the immigration bureaucracy, it is hard for me to normalize my status. Regrettably, this is also the same for thousands of students throughout this country just like me. We have an opportunity to fix the problem. Idaho Senators Craig and Crapo, along with forty-three other Senators from across the country, have cosponsored the DREAM Act (S. 1545). This bill will remove the barriers to citizenship and education that are keeping students like me from achieving our dreams. I thank our Senators for their courage in supporting this important legislation, and ask them to do everything they can to make sure it gets a vote on the Senate Floor.

I also urge President Bush to champion this legislation. He has acknowledged that our immigration system is broken and hurting everyone. He has said he wants to help people come out of the shadows of society. Signing the DREAM Act will be a first step in fixing that system and making good on his words.

My dream is to study political science or international business. I want to use my education to become a diplomat in order to help both our countries. The only thing stopping me is my immigration status and the complications within the immigration system that isn't working for anyone. Let's move toward some solutions.