STUDENT ACTIVIST TOOLKIT 2011

MY RIGHTS DON'T STOP WHEN I CROSS THE BORDER

This is what an immigrant looks like.

IMMIGRANTS’ RIGHTS ARE HUMAN RIGHTS
Immigrants’ Rights are Human Rights

Dear Student Activist,

Over 2.1 million minors in the United States are deportable and an estimated 65,000 undocumented high school graduates per year are unable to pursue further education. These young people are your classmates, your neighbors, your friends, and you might not know it. They face great challenges now more than ever.

Like you, undocumented students are graduating and looking to fulfill big dreams, but instead are finding themselves at the end of the road. Legal restrictions prohibit undocumented students from receiving federal financial aid and some states do not permit long-time undocumented residents to pay in-state tuition. To make matters worse, students and their families often live in constant fear of discrimination, detention, and deportation, sometimes without any meaningful opportunity to present why they should be permitted to remain in the U.S.

The Development, Relief, and Education for Alien Minors (DREAM) Acts, (S. 952 / H.R. 1842), would provide conditional legal status to a select population of young immigrants and after 6 years an opportunity to permanently legalize their status if they prove to have “good moral character” and complete at least two years of higher education or uniformed service and fulfill additional requirements under the law.

Human Rights Don’t Stop at the Border: Over the last twenty-five years, Congress has failed to remedy the situation of up to 12 million undocumented immigrants who entered the U.S. to take up available work, escape persecution, or be reunited with family members, but have no way of acquiring legal status. Purportedly due to the absence of federal legislation, states and localities are taking immigration enforcement into their own hands and increasingly implementing laws and programs that target suspected immigrants and undermine a variety of human rights, as illustrated by Arizona’s SB-1070 or the federal “Secure Communities” (S-Comm) program. Undocumented youth and their families across the country suffer the real impact of our government’s failure.

Students are rising up to defend the rights of fellow undocumented classmates and supporting passage of the DREAM Act. Amnesty International advocates that governments respect, protect, and promote the rights of immigrants. Amnesty International, DREAMers and others are engaged in the fight for students so that they may realize their dreams, study, and stay safely in their communities and with their family members.

Join us this September for “Immigrants’ Rights are Human Rights” as part of the Human Rights Ambassador Challenge (www.amnestyusa.org/challenge). Lend your voice, talent and time to making a difference.

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL USA RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Urge U.S. Senators to cosponsor and vote in favor of the DREAM Act (S. 952).
- Urge U.S. Representatives to cosponsor and vote in favor of the DREAM Act (H.R. 1842).

In solidarity with every DREAMer!
The DREAM Act

Background Information

The DREAM Act, if passed, will create an opportunity for certain undocumented students to acquire lawful status in the U.S. The full name of the bill is The Development, Relief, and Education for Alien Minors Act in the U.S. Senate and the American Dream Act in the House of Representatives. The DREAM Act currently before Congress qualifies students for a 6-year conditional permanent resident status if he or she:

1. Arrived in the U.S. under the age of 15;
2. Lived in the U.S. for at least 5 years before the date of the enactment of the DREAM Act; and
3. Completed high school or earned a GED

After six years the student may be able to lift the conditions on permanent residence if during the period of conditional status the student either completed 2 years at a 2-year or 4-year college or serve in the armed forces for 2 years or more. Students will not qualify for this relief if they have committed certain crimes, are a security risk, or are inadmissible or removable on certain other grounds.

The DREAM Impact

Human rights law and standards require that a person be provided with an opportunity to acquire legal status based on circumstances such as long-time residence in a country, age on arrival, and family presence. The DREAM Act fulfills this obligation for some young people. It promotes the right to family unity and dignity and the right to be free from discrimination. It also provides an avenue for students to continue their education, an indispensable means of realizing their full spectrum of human rights. The passage of the DREAM Act would provide thousands of students with the opportunity to attend college. The right to family life and unity, protected by several international human rights conventions and covenants, would be advanced by the DREAM Act's path to legalization for eligible young people. With legal status made possible under the DREAM Act, it offers young people a form of protection from many human rights abuses, such as arbitrary arrests, detention and deportations, currently experienced by thousands of young people who entered the U.S. as children.

WHO: Over 2.1 million minors in the United States may be subject to deportation and every year an estimated 65,000 undocumented high school graduates are unable to pursue a further education.

Many of these students live in constant fear of detention and deportation if exposed to immigration authority. A denial of access to justice and arbitrary arrests and detention make it very difficult for students and their families to defend their cases, even when they are eligible for asylum, an immigration visa, or another avenue to stay legally in the U.S. While the Department of Homeland Security's Secretary Janet Napolitano has said that DREAM Act students were “not the priority” when it came to enforcing immigration laws, DREAMers continue to be deported.

Most DREAMers never have a fair chance to go before a judge and tell their story before being deported. Without any real avenue to acquire legal status, oftentimes many students who graduate from high school have limited options to continue their studies, or work and stay in the only country they know.

Did you know:

The DREAM Act passed the House in the 111th Congress in 2010, but not the Senate, short of only 5 votes. Here is the LA Times Article for more information: http://latimesblogs.latimes.com/lanow/2010/12/dream-act.html
DREAM Act TALKING POINTS

- Amnesty International supports the DREAM Act because it promotes access to human rights including the right to education, family life and unity, and due process.
- The DREAM Act promotes respect for human rights by providing students who have completed at least two years of college or served in the military the opportunity to remain in the U.S. and contribute their unique experiences in the labor force.
- Absent legislation such as the DREAM Act, 2.1 million young people will continue to face almost insurmountable barriers to higher education, will be unable to work legally in the U.S., and will likely live in constant fear of arbitrary detention and deportation.
- It is the responsibility of the U.S. Government, regardless of legal status, nationality or origin of the immigrant, to ensure that fundamental human rights norms are adhered to, including providing all immigrants with the opportunity to present to a court the reasons that deportation is not appropriate given their own circumstances. Millions of young people in the U.S. are not afforded this right.
- The DREAM Act would facilitate the ability of young people to pursue college education by returning to states the authority to determine who qualifies for in-state tuition. Even with long-term residence in a state, currently undocumented students are treated as out-of-state applicants, making tuition fees almost impossible to pay.
- The arbitrary deportations of DREAMers and their families is a violation of international human rights law.

Preparation for counter arguments:

1. **The DREAM Act is a form of “amnesty.”**

   The DREAM Act isn’t a blanket benefit to all undocumented immigrants. It doesn’t let anyone “cut in line,” as some opponents say, but rather creates a narrow process for people brought to the US at a young age to pursue college, serve in the military, and become eligible to apply for permanent residence. Applicants must prove that they entered the U.S. a number of years before the date of enactment, have remained in good moral standing, have not committed disqualifying crimes, gained a high school diploma, and successfully completed two years of college or successfully served in the military.

2. **The DREAM Act will allow students to instantly bring their family members to the U.S.**

   This is not true. The DREAM Act creates a process that will likely take more than 10 years to get complete. Only after that will the person acquire permanent residence. Even then, it will take years before family members, including parents and siblings, may have the opportunity to enter the U.S. through the “DREAMer’s” petition.

3. **We don’t have money to support more people in our states and our universities.**

   The DREAM Act fosters a competitive and successful student body, maximizing the investments made in funding and educating students during their first 12 years in primary and secondary schools. Education at the primary level is a fundamental human and civil right protected under the U.S. Constitution. The Dream Act does not excuse students from taking responsibility for college fees but instead will inject into colleges and universities strong students who are required to pay tuition, just like other students. The DREAM Act does not provide for welfare or additional federal or state benefits.
DREAMer Profile: Luisa Argueta

Luisa Argueta and her mother, Brenda Gutierrez Samayoa, came to the United States when Luisa was four months old. For the past 19 years, Brenda and Luisa have made California their home. Like millions of immigrants, they have tirelessly invested in their work, education, and community.

Luisa, an outstanding college freshman at Diablo Valley College, aspires to transfer to UC Santa Barbara to pursue Oceanography. She fears being too far from her home in Antioch, where her family has owned a home for over 10 years and where they are long-time members of the Iglesia Bíblica Bautista de Antioquia. She has a contagious smile and is the big sister and mentor to two little sisters who count on her solid advice and bedtime stories.

Luisa and Brenda can’t imagine a life anywhere else but in the United States. Unfortunately, the comfort and security of their home, church, and community has recently been placed at great risk. On September 12 Luisa and her mother face must "order to deport" back to Guatemala after their asylum application was denied.

Luisa and her mother and many other families like theirs count on your support to remind our Senators of the need to pass the DREAM Act. The DREAM Act provides the opportunity for young people like Luisa to legalize their status in order to advance significant human rights goals – including the right to due process and the right to family life and unity. For thousands of young people, these human rights are denied because of a label “undocumented immigrant”. We must ACT NOW to prevent Luisa and her mother from being deported.

Amnesty International is taking a stand with people around the world who are fighting for their right to lead a life of dignity - documented or undocumented, on “our” side of the border or theirs. Will you stand on the side of justice?

Sign Luisa and Brenda’s petition to ask DHS Secretary Janet Napolitano and ICE Director John Morton to take immediate action to stop the deportation of mother and daughter and grant their petition to stay legally in the U.S.  http://action.dreamactivist.org/luisa

DREAM Stories:

We encourage you to learn more about young people who would benefit from the DREAM Act. Below are a few resources and links that share the experiences of DREAMers in your state.

DREAM Act Class of 2010-2011:  Created by the National Immigration Law Center, the DREAM Act Class of 2010-2011 has the stories of Floridians, Ohioans, New Yorkers, and other DREAMers from across the country. http://www.nilc.org/immlawpolicy/DREAM/student-profiles-PP-2010-12-17.pdf

Senator Durbin supports DREAMers: Senator Durbin, who introduced the 2011 DREAM Act, has highlighted DREAMers from across the country on his website: http://durbin.senate.gov/public/index.cfm/hot-topics?id=40025f91-0f0f-450f-b5c0-a6196ff2c252
Video of Senator Durbin telling Herta Llusho’s DREAM Act story on the floor of the United States Senate. http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GCpLyBf7NC4&feature=list_related&playnext=1&list=SPDC955D6693457B71
As you embark on a new academic year, think about a **Back-to-School Solidarity Action** as your first event of the year to connect with others on campus and raise visibility. An activity as simple as this is a great way to bring together current student activists and interested students!

1) Educate your community about the Dream Act
2) Lobby your Senator (petitions, visits, letters)
3) Show your solidarity

Every action will look different, but whatever form your event takes, your participation will help spread understanding of the DREAM Act and build broad support for DREAM students!

**Talk to your Field Organizer** to make state-specific advocacy goals: e.g. pass the State Dream Act in the state Assembly. Find out who your Field Organizer is by calling 1-866-A-REGION

**Let us know about your actions** email: ccarrion@aiusa.org

**1: ORGANIZE A “TEACH-IN” or take part in DREAM Sabbath:**

*Educate your classmates, neighbors and local groups about the importance of supporting the DREAM Act.*

- Screen a **short film** or documentary about the lives of undocumented youth and/or the DREAM ACT, or more generally about immigration, such as *The Invisibles.*
  
  **Film:** [http://www.amnesty.org/en/theinvisibles](http://www.amnesty.org/en/theinvisibles)

- Invite a representative from a campus group or local organization working on the DREAM Act to **speak about the need for the legislation and other local and state tuition equity measures.**

- Pass out the information cards (*included in this Toolkit*) for quick facts about the DREAM Act

- Ask attendees to sign the **PASS THE DREAM ACT** petition before you’re finished!

**Take Part in DREAM Sabbath Events:**

**Plan a vigil or public event in support of DREAM youth**

During the DREAM Sabbath 2011, September 16th–October 9th, communities of faith will lift up the lives of DREAM students in their prayers, readings, and reflections during at least one Sabbath service to increase understanding of the obstacles DREAM students face, their hopes and contributions to our communities, and to build support for the DREAM Act and other measures that protect DREAMers and their families. DREAM Sabbath is being organized by The Interfaith Immigration Coalition, a partnership of faith-based organizations, and for more information visit the IIC website for more information: [InterfaithImmigration.org](http://InterfaithImmigration.org).
2: **REACH OUT + LOBBY with DREAM Activists:**

- **Research** your state’s policies regarding the DREAM Act, tuition equity measures, and other barriers to education for undocumented youth.
- **Build coalitions** with DREAM Activists or other allies both on and off your campus
  - Look for local or state-based organizations that work on the DREAM Act or immigrants’ rights
  - On your campus, consider the following places or people to partner with or ask for support: multicultural student centers; international student communities; cultural organizations; academic programs such as Education, Human Rights/Social Justice, or Cultural Studies; or other faculty, administrators, or student groups you think would be interested
- **Get the word out.** Post announcements on your school’s blog, Facebook, and other public sources; Write letters-to-the-editor of your school and local city papers; collect petition signatures using our petition below; and make phone calls to your representatives.
- **Arrange an in-person visit with your representatives.** Organize with a coalition of DREAM Activists and other community leaders, activists, and immigrants’ rights advocates. Be ready to tell personal stories and explain that passage of the Dream Act would be consistent with U.S. human rights obligations. Persuade other influential community members who can provide support to arrange meetings.
- **Lobby elected officials** with members of Amnesty International. On September 15 visit Amnesty International’s website ([www.amnestyusa.org/lobby](http://www.amnestyusa.org/lobby)) to join or start a delegation in your area!

3: **TAKE PART IN THE PHOTO ACTION**

- **Set up a public place** – with a booth, a table, or just on your campus – with a camera, signs, Amnesty literature and petitions. Use slogans (suggestions below) on a poster. Ask passers-by to take a photo with the poster to support the DREAM Act!

  - (YOUR SCHOOL NAME) SUPPORTS the DREAM Act.
  - IMMIGRANT RIGHTS ARE HUMAN RIGHTS
  - EDUCATION NOT DEPORTATION
  - THIS IS WHAT AN IMMIGRANT LOOKS LIKE

**Create a yellow stop-sign with the message**

- “HUMAN RIGHTS DON’T STOP AT THE BORDER” and mark a “border” line through campus with tape or chalk on the ground. Have people take photos with the stop sign standing on both sides of the border.
- **Get together** a group of DREAM Act supporters to spell out a human rights message in a public place, or in front of your school— with your bodies, or using something school-related, such as textbooks, or backpacks (examples below). Take photos!!
- **Share your photos** with your Field Organizer, who can arrange to send them to your representatives, and put them on the AIUSA Flickr account.
- More details about these actions will be explained during the Webinar on September 1. Contact ccarrion@aiusa.org for more information.
- **Post your Photos on our Flicker Account:** [http://www.flickr.com/photos/66313685@N02/](http://www.flickr.com/photos/66313685@N02/)
Sample Flyer & Petition

- Include your school’s information
- Customize with meeting information (Where/When) and include contact information
- Check our website for more information: [http://bit.ly/oa1vg1](http://bit.ly/oa1vg1)

PASS THE DREAM ACT NOW!

EDUCATION NOT DEPORTATION

My name is Laura and I’m undocumented. This means I’m unable to do basic things like obtain a drivers license and go to college or to work. There are over 2 million undocumented youth like me. This is not about politics. This is about being recognized as a full-fledged human being in the only country I know as home.

Call your senator at (212) 224-3121 and tell them we must pass the DREAM ACT now!

Like Laura, these young people are your classmates, your neighbors, your friends, and you might not know it.

- Each year an estimated 65,000 undocumented high school graduates are unable to pursue further education.
- In November 2010 the DREAM Act came close to passage, falling just five votes short in Congress.

Let's get the DREAM Act passed TODAY! For more information visit: [http://bit.ly/oa1vg1](http://bit.ly/oa1vg1)

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Dear Senator,

We, the undersigned, ask the US Senate to enact the DREAM Act.

Each year, high schools throughout the United States graduate roughly 65,000 students who entered the US as children and grew up in the U.S. without legal status. These graduates, who include honor students, star athletes and aspiring professionals, have few opportunities, because they face barriers to higher education, are unable to work legally, and often live in fear of detection by immigration authorities.

Amnesty International supports the Development, Relief and Education for Alien Minors Act (DREAM Act) as a remedy for human rights abuses experienced by thousands of young people who entered the United States as children and have demonstrated a commitment to their education and/or military service.

Increasingly restrictive measures, immigration enforcement crackdowns and raids, emergency decrees, and criminalization of entry without inspection have done little to address the root causes of undocumented immigration. Current immigration law and policy fails to address wider policy issues such as the demand and reliance on cheap labor in some sectors of the economy. Instead of addressing the reality of the labor market by providing sufficient work visas, these policies have fed xenophobic attitudes and led to greater stereotyping of immigrants as criminals.

The Special Rapporteur on the Human Rights of Migrants has noted that “[arbitrary deportation] policies and the anti-migrant discourse that often accompany them have also in certain cases prompted and legitimized a notable increase in institutionalized discrimination, leading to further violations.” The U.S. prides itself on equality and equal access, and cannot ignore the impact of increasing xenophobia, racism and other intolerance as a result of political and media vitriol, and immigration laws unresponsive to market demands, particularly related to industries in great need of workers, the availability of foreign workers and the complete absence of visas to permit their lawful entry.

By enacting and implementing the DREAM Act, the U.S. Government will be taking an important step toward ensuring respect for the human rights of young undocumented immigrants. The U.S. is obligated to respect, protect and fulfill the human rights of all those under its jurisdiction, regardless of their nationality or origin, and regardless of their immigration status. Passage of the DREAM Act would demonstrate that the U.S. recognizes that children cannot be held responsible for the decisions of their parents, and that the “choice” made by immigrant parents, often fleeing poverty or persecution in their home countries, is a life and death decision, and not the result of any desire to break U.S. law.

We support the DREAM Act because children who grew up in the U.S. and know no other home should not be deported to a foreign country simply because it was their place of birth. The legislation will help to ensure that a range of human rights, will be respected and protected.

Sincerely,

NAME

SIGNATURE

CITY, STATE, ZIP

EMAIL ADDRESS

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Send a copy of your petitions to Amnesty International USA
5 Penn Plaza, 16th Fl, New York, NY 10001
Or email them to youth@aiusa.org
PERSUADING YOUR STATE SENATORS

We need the support of your Members of Congress to ensure passage of the DREAM Act into law once and for all. Fortunately, they depend on you for support to stay in office and will listen when they know an issue is of concern to their constituents. While the DREAM Act has already gained the support of many legislators, it is in need of many more supporters to ensure its passage. It is in your hands to speak up, organize, and persuade legislators in your state who are undecided (or oppose) to support the DREAM Act.

1. **Instructions:**
   The following section will explain appropriate ways to reach out to and persuade your state senators.
   There are several ways to effectively communicate your concerns:
   - **Personal written letter or fax:** Draft a letter with your own personal story or that of someone you know who would benefit from the DREAM Act. Thank your legislator if s/he has already shown support. Be specific if you are referring to state bills on you want to see passed. Keep it short and in message with Amnesty talking points.
   - **Email:** Write an email like you would the personal letter. However, remember that while it will be delivered faster than a letter, it is also more likely to be overlooked or deleted.
   - **Form letter:** The personal touch of a letter is always best, but the template letter provided below is a great tool to use for events or when inviting large numbers of people to campaign on your issue. You can ask people to take the form letter and rewrite in their own words.
   - **Petition:** A petition, which includes a letter and a list of signatures and addresses or emails from individuals and organizations, is a useful tool to show widespread support and/or the endorsement of important, well-known individuals or organizations. Consider whether you want to show the endorsement of powerful organizations and individuals (i.e. celebrities or politicians) or whether your purpose is to strong support by individuals.

Resources In Your State:

Amnesty International Regional Information: Remember to always contact your Field Organizer and volunteer Legislative Coordinator for additional support or resources in your state. To learn who your field organizer is call 1-866-A-REGION.

**Who are your Senators:** For a list of U.S. Senators and their contact information visit: 

Dear Senator,

We, the undersigned, ask the US Senate to enact the DREAM Act.

Each year, high schools throughout the United States graduate roughly 65,000 students who entered the US as children and grew up in the U.S without legal status. These graduates, who include honor students, star athletes and aspiring professionals, have few opportunities, because they face barriers to higher education, are unable to work legally, and often live in fear of detection by immigration authorities.

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The DREAM Act promotes respect for and protection of the human rights of undocumented young people. We strongly urge you to pass the DREAM Act into law.

Sincerely,

[Your Name or Group Name]
3. **Follow up and Invite your U.S. Senator to meet with you and your group**

There are many important reasons why you should follow up with your Senator to ask for a meeting:

- Reinforce reasons to support the DREAM Act
- Gain his/ her commitment of support
- Ask your legislator to be a spokesperson for the DREAM Act
- Develop a lasting relationship with your legislator that will bolster further support

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**Preparing for the meeting:**

1. **Select an issue**: Whether you are campaigning for the DREAM Act, an individual DREAMer’s case, or a state or local educational equity bill, it is important you understand and know what you are asking.

2. **Schedule the meeting(s)**: Contact the officials’ district offices in your state and possibly in their Washington, DC offices; send background material; and work with staff members and schedulers to set meeting times and locations. Don’t give up and be persistent!

3. **Know the issue**: Do your background research and know your asks. Be thoughtful of your messaging and your messengers.

4. **Prepare meeting agendas and leave behind materials**: Send background materials to the person with whom you will be meeting and leave materials at the office.

5. **Practice the meeting(s)**: Meet with your delegation to decide who will say what, practice what each person will say, and brainstorm answers to possible questions from the official or staff member.

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**The meeting: Remember the ABCs: Accurate, Brief, and Courteous**

1. **Introductions**: Be memorable, human, and friendly. Introduce Amnesty International and its presence in the state or district.
2. **Thank the elected official** for previous positive actions
3. **Make the ask**
4. **Give brief background** on the issue
5. **Discuss the ask**
6. **Arrange follow-up communications**

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**The follow-up:**

**Develop a relationship**

1. **Send a thank you note**
2. **Send responses to questions** raised during the meeting: Contact your LC for help answering questions.
3. **Follow-up on the issue**
4. **Thank the official**: If the elected official takes the requested action, thank him or her. Carefully consider whether to go public with a letter to the editor or ceremony or to make a quiet thanks.
5. **Do follow-up actions**: Letter writing, phone calls, letters to the editor, community education sessions, or vigils help thank the official or urge him or her to take action depending on your strategy.
6. **Continue contact** with the office next time the issue comes up: Provide new information and AI’s stance.
7. **Continue to build a relationship** with the elected official or staff person
**Think Collaboratively; Raise Awareness**

As you take on your DREAM Solidarity Actions, think about who in your school and your community you can inform and engage to garner support and heighten public awareness.

**Inform** your fellow students and community members about the challenges that DREAMers face in your community and the need for the DREAM Act and other meaningful reform to our immigration law. Work with and support DREAMers so they can inform others about their individual stories and gain support on their cases to stay in the U.S. as well as bring light to the need for the DREAM Act and other meaningful changes.

**Engage** and connect with other student groups, especially human rights, faith-based groups, educators and school administrators, and even business groups to support your campaigns. A diverse representation of community and business leaders will strengthen your campaign and make your work more sustainable.

**Outreach and Communication Tools at your Fingertips**

The era of one way communication is over. Media is becoming increasingly democratized and it is already at your fingertips. Use your cell phone, Facebook / Twitter account, email, and many other tools you already have to make change happen.

To keep up to date on Amnesty and our work on Immigrants’ Rights check out our these online resources:

- Stay tuned for our Report on the Human Rights Violations on the USA Southwest Border coming this Fall.

For more information contact [youth@aiusa.org](mailto:youth@aiusa.org)

Thank you!