

STATEMENT OF
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BEFORE THE
SUBCOMMITTEE ON IMMIGRATION, REFUGEES
AND BORDER SECURITY
COMMITTEE ON THE JUDICIARY
UNITED STATES SENATE

AT A HEARING ENTITLED
“S. 952, DEVELOPMENT, RELIEF, AND EDUCATION FOR ALIEN MINORS
(DREAM) ACT OF 2011”

PRESENTED
JUNE 28, 2011

Chairman Durbin, Ranking Member Cornyn, and members of the Subcommittee. Thank you for the opportunity to submit this testimony. On behalf of the National Women's Law Center, an organization that for nearly 40 years has worked to expand the possibilities for women and girls in the areas of education and employment, family economic security, and health, we write in support of the Development, Relief, and Education for Alien Minors (DREAM) Act of 2011 and urge you to bring the DREAM Act to a vote.

The prospects of becoming employed and earning a living wage are poor for those without a high school diploma, and the children of dropouts are more likely to drop out of school themselves. The DREAM Act will create a path to U.S. citizenship for eligible, hard-working students from immigrant communities, and in doing so will provide for these students a powerful incentive to graduate from high school and pursue post-secondary education or serve in the military. This will help to stem our country's alarmingly high dropout rates, which have serious short and long-term economic and health consequences for entire families, communities and our nation.

According to research compiled by the Migration Policy Institute, passage of the DREAM Act could benefit over 950,000 women and girls living in the U.S. today. Included in this number are the 436,000 undocumented girls currently under the age of 18 who, after graduating from high school, would qualify for DREAM Act protections. Without the DREAM Act, no matter how hard these girls study, they are ineligible for federal student loans that would

enable them to pursue a college education. Limiting the prospects for immigrant girls increases the likelihood that they will drop out of school, experience unintended pregnancy as teenagers, or struggle to financially support their children. With only a high school degree, these students will face few career options, and will struggle in low-wage jobs without benefits, job security, or advancement potential. The DREAM Act would help to disrupt this cycle and provide the educational and career opportunities that generations of Americans have relied on to achieve economic prosperity. Congress should act now to pass this important piece of legislation.

We look forward to working with you to ensure that all of our nation's children have equal opportunities to learn and achieve economic security. If you have any questions, please feel free to call Fatima Goss Graves or Lara S. Kaufmann at 202-588-5180.