

September 21, 2010

Dear Member of Congress,

We, as members of the *We Were Strangers, Too* Jewish Campaign for Immigration Reform, write today to express support for the DREAM Act of 2009 (S.729). This bipartisan proposal is sensible and humane, and it responds to the needs of vulnerable young immigrant students and the communities in which they live.

Each year approximately 50,000-65,000 undocumented students graduate from American high schools. Many of these students were brought to the United States when they were very young and grew up in American schools, learning American values and experiencing American culture. The DREAM Act could help break the cycle of underemployment, instability, and poverty endured by undocumented immigrants and could reduce dropout rates, criminal justice costs, and the need for public assistance. It would also reward good behavior by young people who, despite their circumstances, have worked hard and remained in school. The young people who would benefit from the DREAM Act are in the formative years of their lives. Further delay, even just a few years, could have a tragic impact.

Our Jewish religious and ethical traditions and core American values call on us to “welcome the stranger.” Yet the beneficiaries of the DREAM Act are really not even strangers at all. Not only are they already a part of America, but America is a part of them. They have come of age in the United States and attended American schools. They watch American television and listen to American music, celebrate American holidays, and speak English – in sum, they are American. The idea of sending them to a country where they haven’t lived for most of their lives is as impractical as it is inhumane.

We urge Congress to act quickly to pass the DREAM Act as a first step towards enacting comprehensive immigration reform legislation that honors our heritage as a nation of immigrants.

Sincerely,

National Organizations:

American Jewish Committee

Anti-Defamation League

B’nai B’rith International

Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society

Jewish Council for Public Affairs

Jewish Labor Committee

Jewish Reconstructionist Federation

Jewish Social Policy Action Network

National Association of Jewish Chaplains

National Council of Jewish Women

Union for Reform Judaism

Women of Reform Judaism

Workmen's Circle/Arbeter Ring

Local Organizations:

CLUE: Clergy and Laity United for Economic Justice of Los Angeles, CA

Greater New York Labor-Religion Coalition

HIAS and Council Migration Service of Philadelphia, PA

IKAR – Los Angeles, CA

Jewish Alliance for Law & Social Action – Boston, MA

Jewish Community Action – St. Paul, MN

Jewish Community Relations Council of Greater Boston

Jewish Community Relations Council of Greater Washington

Jewish Community Relations Council and Jewish Federation of Palm Beach County

Jewish Council for Urban Affairs – Chicago, IL

Jewish Federation and Jewish Community Relations Council of Greater New Haven, CT

Jewish Reconstructionist Federation – Ohio Office

Jewish Vocational Service of New Jersey

Jews for Racial and Economic Justice – New York, NY