**The Illinois DREAM Act** *(SB 2185)*

**Frequently Asked Questions**

*(3/16/2011)*

**What does this bill do?**

The Illinois DREAM Act would help undocumented immigrant students as they pursue higher education. The bill would do four main things:

- Set up an **Illinois DREAM Fund**, a privately-funded entity that would issue scholarships to children of immigrants, and make undocumented students eligible for state college savings and pre-paid tuition programs
- Require high school counselors and college admissions and financial aid officers to get **trained on educational opportunities** for immigrant youths.
- Enable undocumented students to get **driver’s certificates**
- Establish an **Illinois DREAM Commission** to administer the DREAM Fund, oversee implementation of the act, and research issues regarding undocumented student access to higher education.

**Why is this bill important?**

Roughly 95,000 undocumented youths live in Illinois. These youths have successfully finished high school; many have excelled in their academic work and emerged as leaders in their communities. They aspire to be doctors, teachers, scientists, and engineers. Despite their success these youths face many obstacles in going on to college, including lack of good information about their opportunities and limited financial resources. The Illinois DREAM seeks to help these youths in overcoming these and other obstacles to continuing their education.

**How does this differ from the federal DREAM Act?**

The Illinois DREAM Act does not offer a path to legal status, since only the federal government can grant residency. But until the federal government acts, the State can still provide help for DREAM-eligible students.

**Does this involve spending state money for illegal immigrants?**

This legislation involves private funds. The Illinois DREAM Fund will be funded through private donations, and the college savings and pre-paid tuition programs involve contributions from private individuals and groups. The costs of driver’s certificates will be paid for entirely through fees, and will not be subsidized by the state.

**Why would we want these youths to get driver’s certificates?**
Anyone driving on our highways and streets should know the rules of the road and should be tested, licensed, and insured. This includes young people on their way to and from school and other activities. Making sure that DREAM-eligible students get tested and insured as part of getting a driving document would make the roads safer for all Illinois residents.

**Why can’t these youths get regular driver’s licenses?**

The federal REAL ID Act requires states driver’s licenses can be issued only to individuals with lawful immigration status. If licenses do not follow this requirement, they cannot be used for federal identification purposes (such as boarding airplanes or entering many federal facilities). REAL ID, however, allows states to issue other driving documents that do not require legal status, so long as these documents look different from regular licenses and are marked as not valid for federal identification purposes.

**Won’t criminals be able to get a driver’s certificate?**

Anyone convicted of a felony would be barred from getting a certificate. In addition, all other disqualifications would apply, including convictions for drug offenses, gang crimes, and sexual offenses.

**Isn’t this an amnesty for illegal aliens?**

Only the federal government can grant lawful status. This state law cannot do this.

**What happens after these youths finish college?**

Youths who earn college degrees still face obstacles: most significantly, they will not have authorization to work. We will still need to work on the federal level to win the DREAM Act and immigration reform to fully enable these young people to realize their dreams.