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Dear Representative:

On behalf of the American Bar Association and its nearly 400,000 members nationwide, I write to urge you to vote in favor of the Development, Relief, and Education for Alien Minors Act (DREAM Act).

The DREAM Act would provide a path to legal residence and citizenship for certain deserving undocumented immigrant youth. It would permit eligible students to obtain conditional legal status if they: entered the U.S. before the age of 16; have been present in the country for at least five years; have graduated from high school or received a GED; and can demonstrate good moral character. These individuals may then become eligible for legal permanent residence if they attend college or serve honorably in the U.S. military.

The DREAM Act is consistent with and promotes American ideals of fairness and opportunity. Children should not be punished for the acts of their parents. Most of the young people who would be eligible to pursue legal status under the DREAM Act were brought to this country as children by family members, through no choice of their own. They have grown up here, gone to school, been active in their communities and, for many, it is the only home they have ever known. The DREAM Act will give these young people the opportunity to earn legal status and become fully contributing members of our society.

Earn is the key word in this case. The DREAM Act would not automatically grant legal status to anyone. It is narrowly tailored with strict age and residency requirements, and only applies to individuals in the U.S. at the time of enactment. Those who believe they may qualify will have to go through a rigorous application process, including a criminal background check, and will bear the burden of proving that they are eligible for conditional legal status. Once granted conditional status, these individuals must complete two years of college or military service and wait for 10 years before pursuing legal permanent resident status.

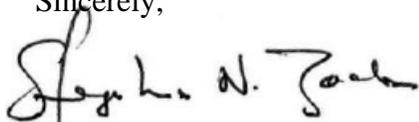
The DREAM Act enjoys broad, bipartisan support from the government and the public. Recent national polls reveal that public support for the DREAM Act cuts across regional and party lines, with up to 70 percent overall support. The bill has been endorsed by a lengthy list of educational institutions and associations, as well as business, civil rights, and religious groups. In addition, the Secretaries of Defense, Education, Labor and Homeland Security have noted that enactment of the DREAM Act has the potential to benefit the American economy and national security.

The DREAM Act is a wise economic investment. Most of the students who will benefit from the DREAM Act have been raised and educated in this country. U.S. taxpayers have already invested in the education of these children in elementary and secondary school, and it is in our national interest to ensure that they have an opportunity to realize their full potential. Leading businesses like Microsoft have endorsed the DREAM Act because they want these students to be able to stay and contribute to American innovation and entrepreneurship.

The DREAM Act also would increase the pool of highly qualified recruits for the U.S. armed forces. There is a strong tradition of military service in immigrant families, but the lack of immigration status prevents many of those who wish to serve from enlisting. Nearly 8% of current servicemembers are foreign born and the military relies on the language skills and cultural knowledge of immigrants. Many current and former military leaders concur. Former Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and former Secretary of State Colin Powell has noted the advantages of this legislation. Secretary of Defense Robert Gates, in a letter on September 21, 2010, stated that the DREAM act would result in “improved recruitment results and attendant gains in unit manning and military performance.” In addition, the Department of Defense Strategic Plan for 2010-2012 includes the DREAM Act as one initiative that would assist in maintaining a quality, mission-ready all-volunteer force.

The American Bar Association strongly supports the DREAM Act. We hope that you will vote in favor of this important and much-needed legislation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Stephen N. Zack". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Stephen N. Zack