

Issue Brief

The DREAM Act



What's the issue?

- The Development, Relief, and Education for Alien Minors (DREAM) Act, first introduced by Illinois Senator Dick Durbin in 2001 and reintroduced multiple times including in 2017, is federal legislation that would create a multi-step process for undocumented immigrants to earn permanent residency.
- The DREAM Act failed to garner enough votes for passage on several occasions, with the most recent major failure in occurring in the Senate in 2010 after the measure passed the House.
- The DREAM Act of 2017 would allow immigrant students who grew up in the United States to earn lawful permanent residence and eventually American citizenship if they:
 - Are longtime residents who came to the U.S. as children;
 - Graduate from high school or obtain a GED;
 - Pursue higher education, work lawfully for at least three years, or serve in the military;
 - Pass security and law enforcement background checks and pay a reasonable application fee;
 - Demonstrate proficiency in the English language and a knowledge of United States history; and
 - Have not committed a felony or other serious crimes and do not pose a threat to our country.

Why does it matter?

- Illinois is in the top 10 states with the largest immigrant population. It is estimated that 450,000 undocumented immigrants in Illinois as of 2014.
- Children who were brought to the U.S. as immigrants are blameless for their current predicament. They were brought here at a young age and it is morally wrong to punish them for the offenses of their parents.
- These children need to have an opportunity to resolve their immigration status and work towards citizenship.
- Students eligible under this Act have been raised in our communities and educated in the U.S. The DREAM Act would transform this lost generation of young people into taxpayers contributing to the economy, instead of people forced to break the law in order to work.
- Providing an opportunity for citizenship is in keeping with our heritage as a nation that treats immigrants fairly and provides a sanctuary for exiles.

What is Presence Health perspective?

- **Caring for our younger population now is an investment in their future.** Caring for a person's health, education, and well-being at a young age leads to greater economic productivity and greater human flourishing. We believe the immigrant youth deserve a chance to thrive and succeed and not live in fear of deportation.
- **We are called to be a voice for the voiceless.** Catholic social teaching calls us to advocate for those who do not have a voice and to fight for social justice. Presence Health supports measures that seek to protect immigrant communities, and believe immigrant youth deserve continued protection and a path to citizenship.
- **Presence Health believes in protecting the dignity of every human life.** Each individual impacted by this Act is created in the image and likeness of God. We are committed to promoting and defending the dignity of human life wherever it is under threat.