November 18, 2010

United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator:

On behalf of the National Education Association's (NEA) 3.2 million members, we urge you to VOTE YES on the Development, Relief and Education for Alien Minors (DREAM) Act, which may come to the Senate floor this month. Passage of this legislation is long overdue and should be addressed during the lame-duck session.

Each year, thousands of undocumented students who have lived in the United States for at least five years graduate from U.S. high schools. Among these students, with whom NEA members work every day, are class valedictorians, straight-A students, and idealistic youth committed to bettering their communities. Yet, because of enormous barriers created by their lack of legal status, many such students are unable to pursue higher education. The loss to these students, and to society as a whole, is significant.

The DREAM Act will provide a path to legal status for individuals brought to the U.S. as undocumented children years ago. The Act is narrowly tailored. It would apply only to individuals brought to the U.S. at least five years ago as children, who have grown up here, and who have remained in school and out of trouble. Such students could adjust their status to that of a conditional permanent resident and could then have the conditional status lifted if they complete at least two years of college or serve in the military.

The bill will also have significant fiscal benefits for states and local communities. For example, a 30-year-old immigrant who graduates from college will pay $5,300 more in taxes and cost $3,900 less in government expenses each year than if she had dropped out of high school. State and local taxpayers have already invested in the education of these children in elementary and secondary school and through the DREAM Act could benefit from that investment. In addition, the bill will help promote the skilled workforce necessary for our nation to compete globally. Leading businesses such as Microsoft have endorsed the DREAM Act because they recognize that our broken immigration system is draining our economy of the talent and resources needed to compete in the global economy.

The DREAM Act is a practical, fair solution that upholds the best of our shared American values of fair opportunity, accountability, and strong work ethics. We urge your support for this important legislation.

Sincerely,

Kim Anderson
Director of Government Relations

Mary Kusler
Manager of Federal Advocacy