



December 2, 2010

The Honorable Harry Reid
Majority Leader
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Minority Leader
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Majority Leader Reid and Minority Leader McConnell:

On behalf of the Asian American Justice Center and the undersigned organizations who are leaders of the diverse Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) community, we write to urge you to pass the DREAM Act this year. With Asian immigrants comprising roughly 40 percent of all immigrants, passage of the DREAM Act, as a stepping stone towards comprehensive immigration reform, is a top priority for the AAPI community.

The DREAM Act would create a path to legalization for individuals without documentation who were brought to this country as children, by no choice of their own, and have since excelled in high school and chosen to serve in our nation's armed forces or pursue higher education. The DREAM Act is aptly named because it would allow these talented individuals the opportunity to become citizens and fully contribute to America.

Passage of this important legislation makes sense for America's economy and our national defense. According to a recent study conducted by UCLA, the combined income generated by individuals who would be eligible for adjustment of status under the DREAM Act would amount to \$3.6 trillion over the next 40 years. The Department of Defense acknowledges the importance of the DREAM Act and lists passage of the bill as part of the Department's strategic plan in order to maintain a mission-ready volunteer military.

More than the economic benefits of the DREAM Act, passing this legislation is the right thing to do. There are an estimated 65,000 students who graduate from high school every year without legal immigration status – including many Asian American and Pacific Islander students. In the University of California system alone, approximately 40-44% of the undocumented student population is AAPI. David Cho, a Korean-American honor student and leader of the UCLA marching band, who hopes to join the U.S. Air Force upon graduation, is just one of the students who would benefit from the DREAM Act. Steve Li, a Chinese-American nursing student from San Francisco whose parents fled China to avoid that country's one-child policy, faced imminent deportation until Senator Feinstein introduced a private bill delaying his removal. A college honor student who dreams of giving back to the U.S. by becoming a doctor, Joanna Kim, also faces deportation and the DREAM Act is her best hope for gaining legal status. These young people embody our American values of hard work and giving back to society.

Now is the best opportunity we have to pass the DREAM Act and take one small step toward comprehensive immigration reform. The DREAM Act is an excellent opportunity for Congress to show voters they can, and will, work together to fix our broken immigration system. These high-achieving students deserve a chance to contribute fully to the U.S. and pursue the American Dream. We urge you to support the DREAM Act and to vote against any amendments which would undermine the intent of this important legislation.

Sincerely,

Asian American Institute, Member of the Asian American Center for Advancing Justice
Asian American Justice Center, Member of the Asian American Center for Advancing Justice

Asian American Legal Advocacy Center, Inc. (AALAC) of Georgia

Asian Law Alliance

Asian Law Caucus, Member of the Asian American Center for Advancing Justice

Asian & Pacific Islander American Health Forum

Asian Pacific American Labor Alliance, AFL-CIO

Asian Pacific American Legal Center, Member of the Asian American Center for Advancing Justice

Asian Pacific Americans for Progress

Asian Services In Action, Inc.

Association of Asian Pacific Community Health Organizations

California State University Long Beach, Pacific Islanders Association

Chinese Community Federation of Atlanta

Culture Connect, Inc.

Japanese American Citizens League

KAYA - Filipino Americans for Progress

Laotian American National Alliance

National Asian American Pacific Islander Mental Health Association

National Asian Pacific American Families Against Substance Abuse, Inc.

National Association of Asian American Professionals

National Federation of Filipino American Associations

Pacifika Voice Media

PELE, The Sorority of Oceania

OCA

Sikh American Legal Defense and Education Fund

South Asian Americans Leading Together

Tao Omega Alpha (TAO), The First Pacific Islander Fraternity