



August 3, 2010

Senator Diane Feinstein
11111 Santa Monica Blvd., Suite 915
Los Angeles, CA 90025

RE: Support for Leadership on DREAM Act (S. 729)

Honorable Senator Feinstein:

We are writing as elected graduate students leaders from the largest university in the state: UCLA. We represent a community of 12,000 graduate students, including PhD, MA/MS, business, law, and medical students. We are researchers, professionals, and professors-in-training. We write to strongly urge you to take active leadership to ensure that the DREAM Act (S. 729) passes a Judiciary Committee vote and then the full Senate this summer. It is crucial that the DREAM Act proceed as a stand-alone bill this year, so that it is not held up by political showmanship in Washington, D.C.

As you know, the DREAM act will allow youth who reside in the U.S. without official authorization, often due to no fault of their own, to regularize their immigration status if certain conditions are met. We recognize that you have affirmed your support of the DREAM Act, however we feel that that the urgency of the situation requires a more active effort from leaders such as yourself.

Why this urgency? One of several predecessor bills to the current DREAM Act, S 1291, was first introduced by Sen. Hatch in 2001. Nine years later, our classmates, students and friends are still forced into the shadows out of fear that a job application or traffic stop might result in deportation from the country in which they have spent most of their lives. Every day that the DREAM Act is tied up in committee is a day that they cannot rest easy or contribute fully to this country. We therefore join the UCLA Undergraduate Students Association in standing by our peers—several of whom are graduate students—who are now in entering the 14th day of a hunger strike for the DREAM Act in front of your Santa Monica office, just minutes from our campus.

Now is the best and most important opportunity we've had in years to pass incremental immigration reform. We have seen unprecedented support for sensible and humane immigration policy overhaul. However, the lack of action from the President and from Congress has allowed discriminatory and xenophobic policies to fester, resulting in the separation of immigrants from their families, and in the deportation of workers, children, and students alike. In our own state, undocumented students, ineligible for financial aid, are exponentially more affected by budget cuts and fee increases at universities, even with policies like AB 540 in place.

With this in mind, we are strongly urging longtime supporters such as yourself redouble your efforts to pass the DREAM Act during this Congressional session. Your active support is particularly critical, given that approximately 25% of all undocumented immigrants reside in California, with around 8% in Los Angeles Metropolitan Area alone.¹ As such, of the 2.1 million individuals potentially eligi-

¹ Fortuny, Karina, Randolph Capps, and Jeffrey S. Passel. 2007. "The Characteristics of Unauthorized Immigrants in California, Los Angeles County, and the United States." Washington, D.C.: The Urban Institute.

ble for the DREAM Act,² approximately 525,000 will be California residents.

We thank you for your previous support of the DREAM Act and would welcome the opportunity to discuss the matter with you or your staff. Over the summer, we can be reached at 424-230-2962 or pres@gsa.asucla.ucla.edu.

Sincerely,

Lincoln Ellis, Luis Limon, Cheye-Ann Corona, Kimberlina McKinney, and Caitlin Patler

UCLA Graduate Students Association President, Internal VP, External VP, Academic Affairs VP
and Social Science Council President

² Batalova, Jeanne and Margie McHugh. 2010. DREAM vs. Reality: An Analysis of Potential DREAM Act Beneficiaries. Washington, DC; Migration Policy Institute.