



## **DREAM ACT**

**What we see:** A lack of economic opportunity, often fueled by U.S. trade and investment policies, is escalating pressure for many people living on the margins of society to migrate. At the same time, the United States is increasingly dependent on migrant labor. Nevertheless, existing policies and practices in the United States, including mass deportations, criminalization of migrants, and militarization of the southwest border, are pushing migrants deeper into the shadows of society, keeping them in a semi-permanent state of insecurity and vulnerability.

Many migrants come to the U.S. with their young children who grow and thrive in the U.S. school system and society and call the United States their only true home. Unfortunately, due to strict immigration law, many of these foreign born "American" children are denied many of the same luxuries and freedoms of education as their U.S. born classmates because of past circumstances they could not control.

The **DREAM** Act (Development, Relief, and Education for Alien Minors Act of 2009, S. 729) creates a path to citizenship for undocumented students who have entered the United States before age 16. Despite receiving their diplomas, over 65,000 undocumented high school graduates find themselves being denied higher education each year due to the inability to become citizens. Many are discouraged and deny the United States the benefit of their talents and abilities in the work force.

**What our faith tells us:** Our faith mandates us to welcome the stranger. In his 2009 encyclical, Pope Benedict XVI calls for migration policies focused toward "safeguarding the needs and rights of individual migrants and their families, and at the same time, those of the host countries." Catholic Social Teaching affirms the right to migrate, but also the right to not have to migrate. We must welcome migrants into our communities and places of worship while working with other countries to address the root causes of migration, including economic injustice, environmental catastrophes, armed conflicts, and religious or political persecution.

**What we hope for:** The DREAM Act to be passed by Senate as a first step toward comprehensive immigration reform.

### **Legislation:** The DREAM Act

- Have proof of arrival in the United States before age 16.
- Have proof of residence in the United States for a least five consecutive years since their date of arrival
- Be between the ages of 12 and 35 at the time of bill enactment.
- Must have acquired a degree from an institution of higher education in the United States or has completed at least 2 years, in good standing, in a program for a bachelor's degree or higher degree in the United States. OR- Must have served in the uniformed services for at least 2 years and, if discharged, must have received an honorable discharge.
- Be of "good moral character"