

Statement on the Passage of the Dream Act in Maryland

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We welcome with great joy the passage of the Dream Act in Maryland. We are the eleventh state to acknowledge and codify in law that undocumented immigrant children who were brought here often as infants or toddlers, are entitled to attend Maryland state colleges and universities at in-state tuition rates. These children are American in every sense except being born elsewhere. They often excel in their studies, sometimes even graduating as valedictorians in our high schools. This bill, signed into law on May 10, will allow such students to further their education and thus make an even larger contribution to our state and national economies.

Maryland's Dream Act is the strictest in the country. Those who benefit must have completed three years in one of our high schools. They or their parents must have been paying taxes. They must first attend a community college before admittance into a state university, and such admittance will not count against the number reserved to all Maryland residents. Scholarship assistance is denied outright. We hope that anyone having doubts about this law will carefully consider the benefits that can come to us with a more highly educated work force.

The Church takes seriously its obligation to welcome all of God's children to the best of our abilities. While many in the Episcopal Church have diverse views as to how best to express hospitality through public policy—and not everyone in our parishes supports this particular piece of legislation—we want to state emphatically that the Dream Act is in keeping with our church's long tradition of seeking ways to include others rather than excluding them. We believe that it is only fair that children who are American in every sense except being born elsewhere be allowed to continue their education and thus make even greater contributions to American society.

Please revisit our pastoral letter, *Welcoming the Stranger*, and note therein the many resolutions in favor of immigration reform passed at recent Episcopal general conventions. Recall that our 2010 diocesan convention approved a resolution favoring comprehensive immigration reform. Allowing the Dream Act in Maryland to stand will not only benefit a finite number of immigrant children, it will also provide us with future scientists, inventors, business entrepreneurs, and public servants who can strengthen Maryland's standing as a leader in these United States.

May the itinerant Christ enlighten us about our responsibilities to one another, particularly to those among us who are most vulnerable, and may God's Spirit make us witnesses to the truth that we are indeed one another's servants.