

ADVOCATES FOR THE DREAM ACT,
DO JUSTICE FOR CHILDREN AND YOUTH

In the spirit of American morality, freedom, and justice, we, the undersigned leaders of religious institutions in North Carolina, endorse the DREAM Act, a clear, earned path to citizenship for students who are currently undocumented.

Each year, approximately 65,000 undocumented students graduate from high school, many the top of their classes, but cannot go to college, join the military, work, or otherwise pursue their dreams. Caught in a system where there is little, if any, means for legalizing their status, smart, hard-working kids face an uncertain future. Having already been educated through the public school system, the loss of potential, productivity, and hope for these individuals is also a great loss for this country. The United States is missing out on talented workers and entrepreneurs, and is losing vital tax revenues and other economic contributions.

While we look forward to the eventual passage of comprehensive immigration reform, we believe that the status quo cannot be tolerated. We urge beginning immigration reform by strongly endorsing the DREAM Act, which will unlock the door to the American dream for thousands of young people each year. We were moved by the three students engaged in a lengthy hunger strike outside Senator Kay Hagan's office seeking her support for the DREAM Act.

Recent American history documents that adult African-Americans, born into a segregated world and gradually included in a more open society, suffer the scars of racial oppression and injustice more deeply than African-American generations born after the Civil Rights Act of 1964. As the Civil Rights Act offered new opportunities for African-Americans born after 1964, the DREAM Act offers the hope that new generations of immigrants will live in a future where their efforts and accomplishments will be accepted and valued in our country, and their contributions to American society welcomed.

Children brought to the United States by their families at a young age now know this country as their own. Many have no experience and little knowledge of their country of birth. We acknowledge that children and youth, regardless of heritage, sometimes make unwise choices that result in terrible consequences, and we strongly believe that all children and youth living in this country should be extended the right to work and succeed on their own merits. Undocumented students who were brought to this country by their parents should not be excluded from this just privilege.

The roots of all religious traditions that trace their origins to Abraham (Judaism, Christianity, and Islam) hold hospitality, care of the oppressed, and justice for all peoples as high values. We believe the decency of the American people reflects these same ideals, and we strongly urge leaders of government and citizens everywhere to embrace a fair and positive direction for all of our young people. The DREAM Act alone will not solve our broken immigration system, but it will bring thousands of students out of the shadows.