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Testimonial in support of NYS DREAM Act A04311 (Moya) and S01251 (Peralta) and Tuition Assitan Program reform.

Good afternoon. My name is Natalia Aristizabal. I am a Lead Organizer for Make the Road NY and a Queens College graduate.

Make the Road New York, is a membership organization of more than 16,000 low-income families and 600 small businesses based in New York City and on Long Island, We strongly supports the New York DREAM Act. This bill would provide a long-term economic and fiscal boost to our state, while helping 110,000 young people realize their full potential. It would do so by allowing undocumented students in New York to access state financial aid, including the Tuition Assistance Program (TAP), on an equal basis with all other students. It would also create a DREAM Fund for eligible immigrant youth.

I'm here today to make a case for the NYS DREAM Act and the expansion of TAP. For the past 10 years I have been working in Queens and Brooklyn with immigrant and low income youth. I my self come from a single parent house hold first one to graduate from college and my mother was not able to help me out with my tuition.

Over the years I have seen many bright students, not only academically but intelligent, dedicated and even with an atrepenour mind come throught the doors of Make the Road NY. They not only survive high school but make the best out if and of after school programing.

I have seen these same students struggle in their last two years of college because of their college application process. Besides all the work that it takes, there is another obstacle - the cost.Is usually at that moment when they realize that not only do they not have a social security number but that they can not apply for financial aid. Of the top of. Lupe who had about a 90 average in high school and in her last semester she got depress and didn't apply to college. Or Antonio and Mateo who were only able to pursue college because they were able to get a one year scholarship due to their merits and would then have to figure out how to pay for the remaining years. Students who also come from a one partent house hold and the average income for their family is about \$20,000.

These student are eager to go to college and contribute back to their community, as the matter of fact, they already do because they are active with us at the organizationon.

This year Governor Cuomo has included the New York DREAM Act in his 2015 state budget proposal, bringing it closer to becoming a reality. It is a critical piece of legislation that should be in the final budget. It should not, however, be linked to the education tax credit bill that would direct taxpayer subsidies to private schools and undermine public education in New York.

The New York DREAM Act will provide a huge economic boost to our state. A recent study indicates that

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passage of the Federal DREAM Act would add \$329 billion to the U.S. economy by 2030.¹ With approximately 110,000 DREAMers in New York State, this could represent approximately \$17.2 billion in increased economic output for our state. This increase, however, is largely contingent upon young immigrants having access to higher education. With Congress moving toward providing a fast track path to legalization for undocumented students, and President Obama executive order which provides about 2.5 million youth and young adults with Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals or also known as DACA, all we need is to prepare this future workforce.

The Office of the State Comptroller further confirms the disproportionate return on investment New York would receive by opening TAP to currently undocumented students, estimating that those who complete a bachelor's degree will contribute an extra \$60,000 *each* to New York through state taxes. The \$27 million for DREAM in Gov. Cuomo's proposal pales in comparison to the economic benefits that the bill would reap if passed.

I'm here not only to urge this committee and the governor to include the NYS DREAM Act in the budget and make sure it doesn't hurt any other public school students, but also to ask for the expansion of TAP.

In my last 2 years of college I was already working at Make the Road NY, I had to work to sustain myself and I always thought that was the best way to help my mom. Because my income was over \$15,000 a year I stopped receiving TAP. Not only did I have to pay rent in NYC and all my expenses but I now had to pay for tuition as well. I of course got a government loan, because I was able to, and I want to emphasize that undocumented students do not qualify for a loan. I'm currently still paying back my loans, but the reality is that the income bracket to receive TAP should be higher, and that is not the only issue with TAP. We need look deeply into the whole program and revise it.

The State of New York created the Tuition Assistance Program (TAP) in 1974 to provide needs-based aid to the State's college students. In the 40 years since, TAP has helped 4 million New Yorkers pursue higher education. But too many of today's college students are not well served by TAP, and that the program is due for a reform.

The New York DREAM Act and TAP Reform would position New York as the leader on the East Coast in terms of providing educational opportunity for DREAMers and low income students. It would expand the state's high-skilled workforce and provide us with a comparative advantage in the region when federal immigration legalization inevitably occurs.

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