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MPI Updates National and State-Level Estimates of Potential DREAM Act Beneficiaries

WASHINGTON (December 14, 2010) – Based on changes to the DREAM Act legislation pending in Congress, the Migration Policy Institute (MPI) is issuing revised total and state-level estimates of the unauthorized youth and young adults who might be eligible for conditional legal status.

The DREAM Act of 2010 legislation passed by the House on December 8, 2010 (www.rules.house.gov/111/LegText/111_dream_txt.pdf) drops the age cutoff for eligibility from earlier versions of the legislation, which contemplated extending eligibility to certain people under the age of 35 as of the date of enactment. The House-passed bill also dropped a provision that would have retroactively granted status to certain unauthorized immigrants over the age of 35 who already had earned at least an associate's degree as of the date of enactment.

The legislation adopted by the House would extend eligibility for conditional nonimmigrant status to those under age 30 who were brought to the United States before the age of 16, who have resided in the country for at least the last five years, and have obtained a US high school diploma or its equivalent.

Our July 2010 estimates (www.migrationpolicy.org/pubs/DREAM-Insight-July2010.pdf) were based on the DREAM Act of 2009, which had a higher age cutoff (under 35) and would also have allowed those over 35 with a completed postsecondary education to be eligible for legalization.

According to this updated analysis, slightly more than 1.9 million unauthorized youth and young adults would meet the age, time in country, and age at arrival requirements for conditional legal status under the latest versions of the legislation.¹ Given prior educational, poverty, and linguistic trends, MPI estimates that only about 755,000 – or 38 percent – of those 1.9 million unauthorized immigrants would likely satisfy the DREAM Act's postsecondary or military requirements to obtain legal permanent status.

¹ The latest Migration Policy Institute (MPI) estimates should not be considered a definitive assessment of the legislation that passed the House on a 216-198 vote on December 8, 2010, because it is not possible to estimate the effects of provisions such as those denying eligibility to unauthorized immigrants with one felony or at least three misdemeanor convictions, those deemed to be a public charge, or those who fail the required medical exam.

Table 1. Estimates of Potential DREAM Act Beneficiaries Under the Age of 30

	Total	
	Estimate	Share (%)
<i>Already meet requirements for legal permanent residence*</i>		
18-29 with at least an associate's degree	78,000	4
<i>Eligible for conditional nonimmigrant status</i>		
18-29 with a high school diploma/GED	541,000	27
<i>Eligible in the future for conditional nonimmigrant status if obtain a high school degree</i>		
Children under age 18	934,000	47
<i>Not eligible for conditional nonimmigrant status unless obtain a GED</i>		
18-29 with no high school degree	421,000	21
Total	1,974,000	100

* Even beneficiaries who meet the higher education requirements for legal permanent residence upon enactment of the legislation would still have to spend ten years in conditional nonimmigrant status and meet other conditions (i.e., maintaining good moral character and passing required medical and background checks) before becoming eligible to adjust to legal permanent residence.

Notes: Our estimates of the potential-beneficiary cohorts take into account the following eligibility criteria: Arrived before age 16, have been in the United States for five or more years immediately preceding the date of enactment of the DREAM Act, and are younger than 30.

Source: MPI analysis of US Current Population Survey, 2006-2008 pooled, augmented with assignments of legal status to noncitizens by Jeffrey S. Passel, Pew Hispanic Center.

Table 2. Potential DREAM Act Beneficiaries: State Estimates

State	Estimate/Estimate Range
United States	1,974,000
Top Ten States	
California	500,000
Texas	238,000
Florida	175,000
New York	135,000
Arizona	101,000
Illinois	88,000
New Jersey	85,000
Georgia	71,000
North Carolina	48,000
Virginia	45,000
Other States	
Colorado	30,000 to 41,000
Nevada	30,000 to 41,000
Maryland	30,000 to 41,000

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Oregon	30,000 to 41,000
Washington	21,000 to 29,000
Michigan	21,000 to 29,000
Indiana	21,000 to 29,000
Minnesota	21,000 to 29,000
Utah	21,000 to 29,000
Massachusetts	11,000 to 20,000
Wisconsin	11,000 to 20,000
Tennessee	11,000 to 20,000
Ohio	11,000 to 20,000
Arkansas	11,000 to 20,000
Connecticut	11,000 to 20,000
Pennsylvania	11,000 to 20,000
New Mexico	11,000 to 20,000
Kansas	11,000 to 20,000
Nebraska	11,000 to 20,000
Mississippi	2,000 to 10,000
Iowa	2,000 to 10,000
Alabama	2,000 to 10,000
Oklahoma	2,000 to 10,000
Kentucky	2,000 to 10,000
South Carolina	2,000 to 10,000
Idaho	2,000 to 10,000
Delaware	2,000 to 10,000
Hawaii	2,000 to 10,000
Missouri	2,000 to 10,000
Rhode island	2,000 to 10,000
District of Columbia	2,000 to 10,000
New Hampshire	2,000 to 10,000
Louisiana	2,000 to 10,000
Maine	Less than 1,000
Alaska	Less than 1,000
North Dakota	Less than 1,000
Wyoming	Less than 1,000
South Dakota	Less than 1,000
Vermont	Less than 1,000
Montana	Less than 1,000
West Virginia	Less than 1,000

Notes: Detailed estimates were provided only for the ten states with the largest samples. The other states were grouped by ranges, known as estimate bands.

Source: MPI analysis of US Current Population Survey, 2006-2008 pooled, augmented with assignments of legal status to noncitizens by Jeffrey S. Passel, Pew Hispanic Center.