

Statement of Support for Sen. Durbin



phone 312-376-1766
fax 312-376-1760
web latinopolicyforum.org
20 E. Jackson Blvd., Suite 1550
Chicago, IL 60604

Recently, US Senator Dick Durbin told the story of his then-two-year-old-immigrant mother's journey to the United States to a crowd of more than 1,000 immigrant advocates in Chicago. Her journey was no different than thousands of other journeys of that time; however, fortunately for Senator Durbin, his mother immigrated to the United States from Lithuania in 1911 rather than 2010. Had she immigrated today, her fate might be similar to that of the tens of thousands of undocumented immigrant youths who also came to this country at young ages and who find themselves currently studying at high schools and universities throughout this country. Today, the Senator's mother might be a "Dreamer," a term referring to Senator Durbin's DREAM Act which describes the presently undocumented immigrant youth brought to the US by their parents when, as Sen. Durbin wrote in a *Chicago Tribune* commentary on Friday, "they were too little to understand the consequences."

But there are very real consequences for these "Dreamers," many of whom are now young adults. Although they were raised in the United States, they have no legal status in the only country they call home. And now as they are poised to graduate from our country's institutions of higher learning, they face uncertain futures. The uncertainty comes at a time when they should be filled with hope for a better, brighter tomorrow, rather than living in the shadows fearing deportation.

The many tough dichotomies facing these youth are indicative of just how desperately our nation's immigration system is in need of an overhaul. So it's only fitting that Senator Durbin, the son of an immigrant, would grow up to become a key ally of this country's immigrants and a critical catalyst for the reform of its broken system.

Recognizing that "change takes courage," the undersigned organizations applaud the Senator's commitment to fair and just immigration reform. Sen. Durbin has demonstrated his unwavering commitment to change with his April 9 *Chicago Tribune* editorial and his leadership in the April 10 Rally for America in Chicago. He has also shown courage: Taking such a bold stance on immigration is not easy, especially at a time when tea parties, conservative spin and hate mongering conspire to perpetuate the rhetoric of fear.

We urge Sen. Durbin to continue to recruit the support of his colleagues in the Senate to work for change, and pledge our ongoing support of his efforts for building a just immigration reform.

Sylvia Puente
Executive Director
Latino Policy Forum

Luis Gutierrez
Executive Director
Latinos Progresando

Ricardo Meza
Midwest Regional Counsel
MALDEF

Maria D. Velásquez
Executive Director
Telpochcalli Community
Education Project

Celena Roldan
Executive Director
Erie Neighborhood House

Jaime de León
Director of New Communities
Program
Enlace Chicago

Roberto Ramirez
Founder
Jesús Guadalupe Foundation

Amalia V. Pallares
Associate Professor
University of Illinois at Chicago