



Asian Americans Advancing Justice - Atlanta Supports Higher Education for all

Policy Summary:

- Education is a basic human right and plays a fundamental role in American society.
- Higher education has been shown as the key to leading a more healthy and productive life, becoming more civically engaged, and making more money.
- Georgia would stand at odds with nearly every other state that provides access to higher education for undocumented students. This policy will hurt undocumented Asian and other students and do nothing to solve the immigration problem.

Kennesaw State University student Jessica Colotl was the center of intense scrutiny in 2010 after a traffic stop led to the discovery of her unauthorized status. Colotl's story sparked an intense debate on whether undocumented immigrants should be allowed to attend Georgia's public colleges and universities.

In October 2010, the [Board of Regents of the Georgia University System](#) decided to ban undocumented students from attending the top five public universities and colleges starting fall 2011. Since then, different state bills have been filed seeking to ban all undocumented students from the entire Georgia state university system, which totals 35 colleges and universities and 26 technical colleges.

These state bills are antithetical to [The Development, Relief and Education for Alien Minors Act \(the DREAM Act\)](#), proposed federal legislation that provides undocumented students a path to citizenship if they: entered the United States before age 16 and have been in the U.S. at least 5 years before enactment of DREAM; complete two years of military service or college; and are not guilty of any major crime or deportation order. After meeting all these requirements, eligible students will obtain conditional residency before they can obtain a green card, a process that will take several more years. Despite an [overwhelming number of higher institutions](#) that support DREAM Act and a growing grassroots movement to push for DREAM, the bill has not passed.

While Asian Americans are not often seen as a face to this issue, these state Anti-DREAM bills would affect all ethnicity groups. Statistics show that an estimated 10.6 million people are currently living in the U.S. without legal documents, and among them, [nearly 1 million are from Asian countries](#). In addition, a recent report found that [Asian students make up the largest undocumented student group attending Georgia State University](#).

Advancing Justice - Atlanta supports the right to higher education and effective policies that contribute to Georgia's social and economic well-being.

- ***Education is a basic human right and plays a fundamental role in American society.*** In 1977, the United States signed the [United Nations International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights](#) which recognizes “the right of everyone to education” and that “higher education shall be made equally accessible to all.” Moreover, in the seminal case of [Plyler v. Doe](#), the Supreme Court acknowledged the “fundamental role [education plays] in maintaining the fabric of our society.” The *Plyler* case, while not deciding on the matter of higher education, affirmed the primary importance of education and the significant economic and social costs “borne by our Nation when select groups are denied the means to absorb the values and skills upon which our social order rests.”
- ***Higher education has been shown as the key to leading a more healthy and productive life, becoming more civically engaged, and making more money.*** It’s been shown that higher education leads to higher income, which in turn leads to higher tax revenue. A 2005 study showed that [four-year college workers earned 62% more than workers who had a high school diploma](#). Accordingly, lifetime earnings are also higher for individuals who have higher education. In addition, research shows that higher education creates [healthier, more responsible and civically engaged members](#) of society. These individuals will also rely less on public assistance programs, which will further strengthen our economic base.
- ***Georgia would stand at odds with nearly every other state that provides access to higher education for undocumented students.*** Contrary to popular belief, undocumented students in Georgia are not eligible for in-state tuition so taxpayers do not subsidize undocumented students’ tuition. In contrast, as of March 2012 all states except for South Carolina allow undocumented students to attend public colleges and 10 of those states provide in-state tuition for undocumented students that satisfy certain residency requirements.

The fact is, state anti-DREAM bills would do nothing to solve the immigration problem, the perceived problem of undocumented students ‘taking seats’ from citizen students, or increase employment. [Less than half of 1% of students enrolled in Georgia public colleges are undocumented](#). Those that are enrolled pay out of state tuition, [which provide high profits for the schools and more than makes up for any cost associated with enrolling these students](#). If we want to decrease the unemployment rate, the best [solution is a better education](#) for all that live in our state.

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