

February 3, 2015

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Karina Arango

Fontbonne University, anticipated May 2015

Education Policy Intern with The Scholarship Foundation of St. Louis

Testimony Regarding House Bill 187

My name is Karina Arango. I am an Education Policy Intern with The Scholarship Foundation of St. Louis and a student at Fontbonne University. I am here today to express the importance of accessibility and affordability to higher education for all Missouri students, specifically Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) students.

Under federal law, elementary and secondary education is assured to all students living in the U.S. Our homegrown students, including those with deferred action status, are being denied postsecondary education public benefits. Unless they have significant financial means, which most do not, they are being barred from higher education. Missouri should move forward so that our students can accomplish their educational potential. Policies such as House Bill 187 are confusing our students, Missouri higher education institutions and families.

Achieving DACA status is a lengthy and costly step towards citizenship, these are young people who are trying to make a decent life for themselves, to contribute back to our home state. We like to think that education is a key factor in increasing economic means and should be made accessible to those on their way to citizenship. Currently in Missouri only 1,200 have been granted DACA status. Not all 1,200 will pursue college, but those who do, will most likely have financial need.

Allowing DACA students the opportunity to continue their education here is critical to Missouri's commitment to a diverse, talented, and prosperous community. They are committed to meeting their educational goals here and want to contribute to our state's wellbeing. Let Missouri set out a welcome mat for these students.