

April 18, 2013

Dear Legislator:

Understanding that you face many difficult decisions, the Citizens League and the undersigned allies believe that the **Minnesota Prosperity Act (formerly the Dream Act) is important to Minnesota's economic future and should be passed this year.**

**Demographic trends call for state action.** Minnesota has long been recognized for its well-educated, high quality workforce, but current trends threaten that reputation.

- According to a new set of Minnesota Employment Projections, there will be 885,600 total job openings this decade. By comparison, the labor force is projected to grow by only 186,000 over ten years.
- Data from the Minnesota Chamber of Commerce show that 43 percent of employers are already having issues recruiting qualified employees.
- Young people of color – and immigrants specifically – are a growing portion of Minnesota's population, especially in lower age groups. Sixteen percent of Minnesotans are from immigrant families, including 19 percent of children under age four.
- Historically lower college-going rates by students in these populations will contribute to the decline in post-secondary degrees awarded in Minnesota if action is not taken.

We cannot afford to lose the opportunity to tap into talent already in our state.

**Even with federal immigration reform looking more likely, state action to open educational access is necessary.** It will likely be left to the state to decide to make in-state tuition and financial aid accessible to undocumented youth who are legalized through federal action. Even if federal reform includes federal financial aid for these students (which is unlikely), states will still need to pass legislation to allow some of their undocumented youth (including students who qualify for Deferred Action) to pay resident tuition and/or access state-based financial aid.

Gov. Mark Dayton's higher education budget proposal included in-state tuition and access to state financial aid for students who qualify for Deferred Action, and we applaud this leadership.

**We encourage you to go farther by passing the Prosperity Act, SF 723/HF 875,** introduced by Sen. Sandy Pappas and Rep. Carlos Mariani with 35 bipartisan, urban and rural co-authors. The Prosperity Act would recognize undocumented youth as eligible for in-state tuition, private financial aid passed through a public institution, and state financial aid if they:

- Have gone to a Minnesota high school for 3 years,
- Receive their diploma or equivalent, and
- File an affidavit saying they will apply to change their immigration status as soon as they a



*Common ground. Common good.*

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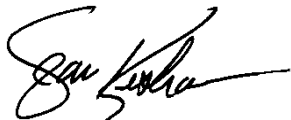
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By the time a student graduates from high school, Minnesota has already invested significant resources in their success. To not help that student pursue higher education would be to squander our investment. The civic and business community in Minnesota understands this, and we respectfully request that you support the Prosperity Act.

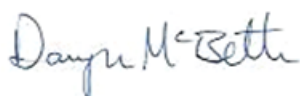
Sincerely,



Sean Kershaw  
Citizens League



David Olson  
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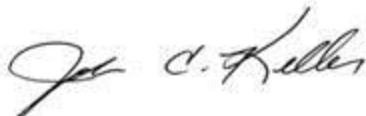
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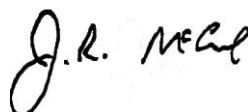
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