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DREAM Act Introduction Represents Positive Step in Addressing Real Immigration Reform

Statement of Support from FIRM- the Most Diverse Nationwide Grassroots Immigrant Rights Coalition

Washington, D.C. –In a strong show of bipartisan cooperation, Senators Hagel (R-NE), Durbin (D-IL) and Lugar (R-IN) joined five Republicans and six Democrats to introduce the Development, Relief for Alien Minors (DREAM) Act, right before the start of the holiday season, traditionally a time for family and reflection.

The DREAM Act permits undocumented high school graduates who immigrated to the U. S. as minors and who have lived in the U.S. for at least five years, to apply for legal status, pursue a college education or join the military and become U.S. citizens.

Cristina Lopez, deputy executive director, Center for Community Change says:

“Passage of this important bill is imperative and represents a significant first step towards comprehensive immigration reform. For far too long, undocumented immigrant youth have been relegated to second class status after completing high school. Without the DREAM Act, this country is left with a permanent underclass —a condition that should be unacceptable in the United States of America today.

“Students should not be caught in the cross fires of an angry immigration debate, focused more on scoring political points than on real solutions. This bipartisan bill is a striking contrast to the focus in the House on an “enforcement only” strategy designed to perpetuate fear and disinformation.

“Although these young undocumented students have grown up in the United States, they face unique barriers to higher education, are unable to work legally, and live in constant fear of deportation to countries they do not consider home. Our immigration laws leave the 65,000 U.S. raised undocumented immigrant students that graduate from high school each year without hope for a better future. These students are on the honor roll, star athletes, talented artists, homecoming queens, aspiring teachers, doctors and American soldiers. The DREAM Act simply levels the playing field for undocumented immigrant youth trapped in a broken immigration system. Once passed, this legislation would allow these students to legally pursue the American dream and contribute to our society.”

Joshua Hoyt, FIRM coalition partner and executive director, Illinois Coalition for Immigrant and Refugee Rights says:

“These students aren’t asking for special treatment, just a chance like their native born peers. The Fair Immigration Reform Movement stands in strong support of this crucial bill and is ready to work with Members of Congress to ensure real reforms are enacted. It is the right thing to do for our nation, but most importantly, for these children.”

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FIRM (Fair Immigration Reform Movement) is a nationwide coalition of grassroots community organizations working on behalf of comprehensive immigration reform and the civil rights of immigrant communities. FIRM is a project of the Center for Community Change. Visit: www.fairimmigration.org.