

February 24, 2023

Re: Yes to HB 2957, Dreamers Belong Act.

Chair, Vice Chairs and Members of the Committee,

My name is Juan Gudino and I am a Clackamas County resident in Oregon. I am writing in support of HB 2957, Dreamers Belong Act and I respectfully ask that you vote in support of bill HB 2957.

My name is Juan Gudino and I am Undocumented Dreamer. Undocumented because I was born in Michoacán Mexico. Dreamer because that was the inherent last name that my parents gave me when they left everything back home to give me a better future. I have lived in Oregon for 18 years. I crossed the border with my sister and mother when I was only five years old. At five, I was going through the most traumatic event in my life that I hope no other kid ever experiences. I have never experienced exhaustion in my life until that day, while walking for hours and hours in 100-degree weather through mountains, experiencing mental breakdowns, seeing people being left behind. Your body should never be under those conditions. The only thing that kept me going was my mom's words "Vamos mijo tu papa' nos esta esperando". Kids at that age are playing with toys living their best lives.

After arriving in the United States at the age of five, I faced many challenges that to this day I don't know how I overcame them. Being an undocumented immigrant in the United States is very difficult. I have realized this the hard way. I, unfortunately, did not have the opportunities that many students had growing up. My father and mother were always working day and night so I never spent time with them. It was always me and my older sister. Saying that I always relied on other people for guidance and motivation. I have always had the dream of one day becoming a teacher so throughout high school I always tried to do my best in classes so that when high school was over I would be set for college.

Like many undocumented students, we are clueless about what it takes to be "college-ready" I had no idea what it meant to apply for Financial Aid and College and more importantly scholarships. All I knew was that I wanted to be the first in my family to attend college. When I first started to let my peers know that I wanted to attend college they were all very supportive and were willing to help me but once I let them know about my immigration status they all had a change of mind. Many of my teachers and peers would always come up with the excuse of "I don't know how to help students like you" or "do you have a backup plan just in case you don't attend college" constantly hearing the same excuse every time I asked for help made me think that being known as the undocumented student really had its downside. That it would mean we are less important than the students that are here legally and that our opportunities to succeed were very limited.

Although I had a dream to attend college, my legal status made it very difficult for me to attend. I was very limited to scholarships because many of them required Citizenship and many of the colleges were too expensive. My family is considered Low income. We live paycheck to paycheck. There was no way my family could afford college for me. In addition, I couldn't work

to help save up because I did not have social security or a worker permit. It was until the arrival of DACA (Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals) that things changed for us. DACA enabled us to pursue and achieve more. For me it meant an opportunity at pursuing higher education, obtaining a job, and acquiring something called: temporary security. Yet, this is not enough, a pathway to citizenship would be the solution.

Sincerely,

Juan Gudino