

February 16th, 2022
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TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF SB523

To: Chair Pinsky, Vice Chair Kagan, and Members of the Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee"
From: Luz Chavez Gonzales

My name is Luz Chavez Gonzales, I am a Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) recipient. I migrated to the U.S. from La Paz, Bolivia with my parents when I was 4 years old. But, growing up, I didn't know I was undocumented. I was introduced to the immigration movement at a very young age due to the involvement of my older cousin. I was only nine years old when I went to my first immigration reform march. By the time I was fourteen, I had joined her in actions on Capitol Hill, going to congressional offices to advocate for a comprehensive immigration reform.

For a long time, I knew my aunt and uncle were undocumented, and I grew up going to these actions with the intention of showing my support. It wasn't until I was 16 that I learned that I was also undocumented. I remember the day my parents took me to a lawyer to apply for DACA. Initially, I didn't know what I was applying for, but midway through the process I stopped and asked. That's when my parents pulled me aside and told me that we were undocumented. At that moment, I felt alone and afraid because I realized that any small mistake would jeopardize the safety of my family. I later felt the consequences of my status in my journey towards higher education.

My story as an undocumented student going through the college process wasn't straightforward, and the lack of support I received was something I always look back at. I graduated from community college in 2019 and became a National Dream.US scholar. Through that, I eventually became the first in my family to graduate from college and received my bachelors degree in Sociology and a minor in Political Science. My intention was always to become a policy maker or even a lawyer one day. It wasn't until then I realized that due to my status, I wouldn't be eligible for a professional license if I were to

become a lawyer. **SB523** would change my life and the lives of so many other undocumented youth and young adults from achieving their potential and dreams in higher ed. I know far too many people I've interacted with that have felt the struggle of changing their career paths due to this restriction. Which is why I respectfully urge the committee to pass **SB523** and give it a favorable report.