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# Maryland DREAM Act would help worthy young people

Pat Perriello | Oct. 19, 2012 NCR Today

Question 4 on the Maryland ballot focuses on Maryland's version of the DREAM Act. It provides undocumented immigrants the opportunity to pay in-state tuition at Maryland colleges under very specific circumstances.

Dan Rodricks in a *Baltimore Sun* column [1] highlights some significant data that illustrate the economic impact of the act and how it will benefit all Marylanders.

Opponents complain that providing support to these "illegals" will damage our economy at a time when we can ill afford to add an additional burden to "real" Americans. Yet Rodricks has come up with some surprising statistics that serve to cast doubt on this perspective.

About 20,000 Marylanders have obtained tax identification numbers. Many of these individuals fall into the category of undocumented workers. They pay about $11 million in state income taxes each year. On the federal level, data indicate undocumented immigrants have paid about $70 billion in taxes annually and received about $43 billion in government services. Clearly, one cannot say this constitutes a drag on the economy. Additionally, the Social Security Administration reported that they had received $240 billion from "unauthorized immigrants" without which they would have had ongoing revenue shortfalls beginning in 2009.

The issue, then, is not as simple as it may seem. These young people are solid citizens in every respect except on paper. They came to our country at a young age and not of their own volition. They know no other country, so there is really no country for them to return to. They have excelled in our schools and conducted themselves as model citizens. They and their families have met the rather stringent requirements of the Maryland DREAM Act. They are contributing to our society, and there is every indication they will continue to contribute well into the future.

We can and should help these worthy young people. But as Rodricks shows, we will also be helping ourselves and our economy. Hopefully, Maryland will pass this DREAM Act. And hopefully, next year, we will see a new Congress pass a comprehensive immigration reform bill that will resolve this contentious issue and help achieve the goal of politicians on all sides of the aisle, including Republicans John McCain and George W. Bush.

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[1] http://www.baltimoresun.com/news/maryland/bs-md-rodricks-1016-20121015,0,1599220.column