Honorable Richard Durbin
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Durbin:

I welcomed the opportunity to talk this morning regarding the DREAM Act. As we have been discussing since 2007, I continue to support those elements of this proposal that provide children of non-resident immigrants a clear path to U.S. citizenship through military service.

Setting aside the question of the process by which Congress should consider this legislation, there is a rich precedent supporting the service of non-citizens in the U.S. military. Since the Revolutionary War, non-citizens have enlisted in the armed forces for service during periods of national emergency. Today, about 35,000 non-citizens serve, and about 8,000 permanent resident aliens enlist every year. The DREAM Act represents an opportunity to expand this pool, to the advantage of military recruiting and readiness.

The expansion of the pool of eligible youth that would result from the DREAM Act provides an important opportunity to selectively manage against the highest qualification standards. This will result in improved recruitment results and attendant gains in unit manning and military performance. Accordingly, I support this initiative and appreciate your continued efforts to bring about this important policy change.

Sincerely,

Robert M. Gates

cc:
The Honorable Carl Levin
The Honorable John McCain