

Statement of Cadet Captain Jessica Calderon

Phoenix Military Academy, Chicago, Illinois

**“Immigrant Enlistment: A Force Multiplier for the U.S.
Armed Forces”**

United States Senate Committee on Appropriations

Subcommittee on Defense

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Phoenix Military Academy

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Thank you Chairman Durbin for inviting me to testify today.

My name is Jessica Calderon; I am a Cadet Captain in the firebird battalion at Phoenix Military Academy. I am a junior with a 4.0 G.P.A, and am ranked number seventh in my class. I came here not by my free will but by the choice of my mother, who wanted nothing other than to provide the best life for her two daughters and pursue the American dream. It was quite a treacherous journey for my mom, who had to be separated from her two beloved daughters in order to have a safe journey coming to America. I came here by plane, so I didn't have to go through the dangerous process most immigrants had to endure to come to America. I finally arrived here when I was three years old. While still maintaining my Mexican heritage, I became an American at heart. I was raised in America, and really consider myself to be a citizen even though some papers and numbers don't say so.

I don't let my status determine what I want to accomplish in life, but I never fail to realize that my opportunities are limited. I hope that in the future, if I have the luxury to become a citizen, I can pursue what I have been dreaming of ever since I stepped foot in high school. Before I even start mentioning what I want to accomplish in life, I want to say that I am grateful for every opportunity that America has given me, and I take advantage of everything that comes my way. America is built upon the efforts of people that work to make the country better, and I abide by the laws that America sets forth. I believe that the characteristics I hold, the things I do at school, and the grades I have earned, make me a good candidate to be a citizen. The only thing that holds me back from accomplishing my goals is my status as an undocumented immigrant in this country. I still dream, and if I'm granted an opportunity to get my citizenship, I won't ever stop working as hard as I have since the day I got here.

I hope to attend The United States Military Academy at West Point, which has been my dream since I first stepped foot in Phoenix. This school really molded me into the person I never thought I would become, but I'm glad that I did. I dream of becoming an officer for the United States Army through West Point if I'm granted admittance into the academy. If this plan fails, I plan to attend college regardless and go through the ROTC process so I can become an Army officer. When I enter college, I plan to major in Creative Writing, Biomedical Engineering, or International Relations and hopefully to have a career in one of those fields. If this fails I will

attend community college, and then transfer into a four year university. No matter what happens, I want to pursue a higher education when I graduate from high school.

Senator, I hope you can persuade the House to pass immigration reform, not only for myself but for the rest of the immigrants who cause no trouble to America and want to serve this country. If the House doesn't pass comprehensive immigration reform, I hope that they can pass the DREAM Act so that at least young immigrants can pursue higher education and serve this country. I also hope that the Defense Department will authorize the enlistment of DACA recipients so that Dreamers can serve in the Armed Forces. This really needs to happen because it is the only thing keeping us from our goals and accomplishing them; we can really contribute to this nation. I consider the rest of the immigrants and myself to be an asset to this country.