On Demand Prompt – 8th grade

**WRITING SITUATION**

In June 2012, President Barack Obama supported a proposal for immigration reform that would create a “path to citizenship” for young people who were brought to America illegally by their parents. To qualify, a person has to have been in the country for at least five consecutive years and be willing to go to college or serve in the military. Immigrants who arrived illegally when they were older than 16 and criminals do not qualify. Nearly 2 million people under the age of 31 could qualify under this act and realize their dreams of studying, working, and living in America. This idea, called the DREAM Act, has been discussed in Congress for more than 10 years without any resolution. There are many viewpoints to consider.

**WRITING TASK**

The editor of Cobblestone Magazine wants to know your opinion about the DREAM Act. Read *The American Dream?* article to help you decide what you think about this Act, which would help undocumented immigrants – i.e., those who came to the United States as children – become legal citizens. Write a letter to the editor of Cobblestone Magazine in which you argue for or against the DREAM Act. Use information from your reading to support your ideas.

Remember to:

* Introduce your claim
* Acknowledge and distinguish your claim from counterclaims
* Anticipate your audience’s knowledge and concerns
* Provide relevant background information from the reading passage
* Maintain a clear focus
* Support your claim with logical reasoning and relevant evidence
* Use words and phrases to clarify the relationship among claims, counterclaims, reasons, and evidence

Sample Response

Dear Editor,

I understand you would like to know students’ opinions about the DREAM Act. As a student concerned about the wellbeing of young people throughout the world, I support this Act that creates a “path to citizenship” for undocumented immigrants who came to the United States as children, for the following three important reasons.

From an ethical point of view, these young “illegal” immigrants should not be held accountable for illegal actions by their parents. For example, according to the article, *The American Dream?,* Brenda came to the U.S. from Mexico when she was five because there were no jobs in Mexico and her family could not support them. Brenda wants “to go to college, maybe even become a nurse. “ But without documents, she cannot get financial aid to help her pay for her education. It is unjust to punish Brenda and ambitious people like her for what their parents did.

From an economic standpoint, there is an advantage to allowing these immigrants to stay. As the text says, “They are badly needed for our economy and our military service. And, if we force them back to the countries they came from, we are simply telling them we don’t care.” Giving legal status to these immigrants would help our economy because as Douglas from Guatemala says, “With this act, I can get a better-paying job and attend college.” Also, as the text says, “Many of the adults among them have helped the U.S. economy by working hard in low-paying jobs. Some have paid taxes and contributed to Social Security benefits.” It is unfair to take away opportunities from those who have already contributed to the U.S. economy.

From a humanitarian perspective, it would be cruel to penalize young immigrants who know no home other than the United States. According to the article, “The young people consider the United States their home. They view themselves as Americans.” And, as Hugo, from Argentina says “I hate waking up each morning thinking it could be my last day in America. I feel like I am an American, but the government sees me as an ‘alien.’ I speak only English and I’ve never broken any laws!” As these “illegals” are as American as their friends and neighbors, speak English, and understand American life and culture, it is inhumane to deport them.

I understand that critics take an opposing view of the DREAM Act, believing, for example, that those who enter the U.S. illegally should not be rewarded because as an immigration attorney says, “it disrespects clients like mine who are following our laws.” However, I believe there are sufficient ethical, economic, and humanitarian reasons to help young immigrants who were brought to the U.S. by their parents, whose actions they had no control over. I hope Congress will resolve this issue so that “nearly 2 million” undocumented young people can realize their dreams of studying, working, and living in America legally.

Thank you for reading my letter.