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Prominent Faith Leaders Defend the DREAM

*As Petition Drive Closes, People of Faith Embrace
Opportunity to Speak to Neighbors and Friends about the
Benefits Maryland will Reap from DREAM.*

A large press conference held at the Cathedral of the Incarnation in Northern Baltimore today featured prominent faith leaders joining hands and committing to carry a message to Maryland voters that the DREAM Act helps Maryland's children and improves their access to the great education that is at the heart of an informed community, a better compensated workforce, and social opportunities for all.

Surrounded by priests, pastors, and faith leadership from various communities, speakers included Bishop Eugene Taylor Sutton, Episcopal Diocese of Maryland, Bishop Mitchell T. Rozanski, Archdiocese of Baltimore, Rabbi Gila Ruskin, Vice-President, Baltimore Board of Rabbis, Bishop Marcus Johnson, New Harvest Ministries, Bishop Angel Nuñez, Bilingual Christian Church, and Bishop Douglas Miles, Bishop of Koinonia Baptist Church and Co-Chair of Baltimoreans United in Leadership Development. The Very Rev. Hal T. Ley Hayek, Dean of the Cathedral of the Incarnation opened up by welcoming the crowd to the beautiful worship center.

Drawing from a Pastoral Letter that the Diocese issued during the last several months, Bishop Sutton described how "our Christian faith tells us that we must treat those who come seeking work and survival not with hostility or slogans, but with minds that seek God's will and hearts that are open with compassion. All of us are children of God, made in God's image and blessed by God's unending love. In a world on the move, we need to learn - as people in every age have been forced to learn - to welcome the stranger, to embrace the 'other.'"

"We hope and pray that the people of Maryland will consider the merits of this law with honest minds and open hearts, and will choose to support it as well," Bishop Mitchell Rozanski of the Archdiocese of Baltimore said. "The most compelling test of our actions will be the

judgment of those who come after us. Today, we want to be sure that these young men and women can look back years from now, and know we stood by them.”

Participants stressed that the DREAM Act makes Maryland stronger, pointing out that studies have shown that increased educational achievement makes people more likely to stay out of poverty, own a home, and raise more highly educated children.

"We are all children of immigrants," said Bishop Marcus Johnson of New Harvest Ministries. "We, together united, are our future."



Bishop Rozanski speaking, with Bishop Miles and Bishop Sutton to the left. Bishop Johnson is in back row center.

Participants at the press conference expressed understanding of the task ahead and committed support and action to winning hearts and minds of Maryland voters. If petitioners are successful in placing the question on the ballot, Maryland voters will have an opportunity to vote on the issue during the general election of 2012. Supporters are planning a forceful education campaign that will include in-depth training on the issue with a broad swath of Marylanders, engagement of faith leaders in conversations from the pulpit, and broad outreach in numerous diverse communities.

“It’s heartening to see the unity of faith communities standing behind the right of students to pursue higher education, an indication of the broad support that exists for the Maryland DREAM Act statewide,” closed out Bishop Douglas Miles, Bishop of Koinonia Baptist Church and Co-Chair of Baltimoreans United in Leadership Development.