

Md. to weigh own 'DREAM' tuition act

The Washington Post

December 30, 2010 Thursday, Suburban Edition

Copyright 2010 The Washington Post All Rights Reserved



Distribution: Every Zone

Section: METRO; Pg. B01

Length: 904 words

Byline: Shankar Vedantam

Body

Maryland would offer in-state college **tuition** benefits to undocumented immigrants who have attended state high schools and whose parents are taxpayers if a measure being proposed by state Democrats becomes law.

The proposal, which will be introduced by Sen.-elect Victor R. Ramirez (D-Prince George's) when the General Assembly convenes next month, is certain to generate controversy at a time of heated debate about illegal immigration, gaping state budget shortfalls, and intense competition for coveted spots at the University of **Maryland** and other state universities. Montgomery College came under attack this year for offering **tuition** benefits to illegal immigrants.

"The citizens of **Maryland** do not offer in-state **tuition** to their fellow Americans" who aren't state residents, said House Minority Leader Anthony J. O'Donnell (R-Calvert). "Why would we offer in-state **tuition** to people who violated our laws to get here?"

But supporters of the measure say students who attended **Maryland** high schools should be encouraged, and not discouraged, to attend college, regardless of their legal status.

"We're working backwards," said Ramirez, who previously introduced the in-state **tuition** benefit in the House of Delegates in 2007. The House passed the bill, but the Senate did not. "We have said, 'You can go to school for 12 years' - we have invested in you for 12 years, and when that investment is ripe for the picking, we say, 'No more.' "

A similar bill was approved by the General Assembly in 2003 but vetoed by then-Gov. Robert L. Ehrlich Jr. (R). If it is approved by the legislature again, Gov. Martin O'Malley (D) is expected to take a more sympathetic view, the measure's supporters say.

Shaun Adamec, a spokesman for the governor, agreed but said that O'Malley would have to examine any immigration-related legislation before deciding whether to support it.

Maryland, with an estimated 250,000 undocumented immigrants, would be the latest state to wade into the often-bitter national debate over **tuition** benefits for young people in the country illegally. California, Illinois, Kansas, Nebraska, New Mexico, New York, Texas and Utah are among states that have passed in-state **tuition** measures,

Md. to weigh own 'DREAM' tuition act

said Brent Wilkes, executive director of the League of United Latin American Citizens, an advocacy group. Massachusetts probably will consider such a move soon.

It's the latest sign that states across the country are stepping in to fill a void left by congressional inaction on immigration policy. As efforts to overhaul the immigration system have stalled in Congress during the Bush and Obama years, states have stopped waiting for Congress and the federal government to act.

The result has been a profusion of conflicting policies across the nation, including a closely watched crackdown on illegal immigration in Arizona.

The Washington area alone provides ample evidence of the vastly differing approaches: Even as Maryland considers giving undocumented immigrants in-state tuition benefits, Virginia not only does not offer such benefits, but legislators have tried - unsuccessfully - to bar undocumented immigrants from enrolling at state-supported colleges.

Ramirez has dubbed his proposal the Maryland DREAM Act, a reference to national legislation that was blocked in the Senate this month. The national DREAM Act would have created a pathway to citizenship for undocumented immigrants who were brought to the United States as children and who had joined the military or attended two years of college.

The Maryland legislation would provide the tuition benefit for students who have attended two years of Maryland high school, have parents or caregivers who are state taxpayers and who express an intent to seek legal status in the country.

O'Donnell, the top Republican in the House of Delegates, said the Maryland version of the DREAM Act has a "decent chance of passing." But that doesn't make it right, he said.

"This is one more effort to legitimize illegal immigration - to encourage it," he said. "We should be discouraging it. It is a violation of our national sovereignty for people to come here illegally. To offer them benefits paid for by citizens - I believe it is an outrage."

A 1996 law explicitly prohibits states from offering in-state college tuition to undocumented immigrants unless they offer such benefits to all students across the country. The law was written by Rep. Lamar Smith (R-Tex.), the incoming chairman of the House Judiciary Committee and an outspoken opponent of illegal immigration.

But states that offer in-state tuition benefits to undocumented immigrants have crafted language that bases eligibility on attending local high schools. The California Supreme Court recently upheld the right of that state to offer in-state tuition benefits to undocumented immigrants.

In Maryland, there could be intense opposition to the proposal. Del. Patrick L. McDonough (R-Baltimore County) recently called for a criminal investigation of Montgomery College, which has long offered tuition benefits to undocumented immigrants who graduate from county high schools.

Sen.-elect Roger P. Manno (D-Montgomery County), who supports the legislation, said that's exactly what every public college in Maryland ought to be doing for students, regardless of their legal status.

"We should give those folks every opportunity to succeed, to get an education and to live with dignity," he said.

vedantams@washpost.com

Classification

Language: ENGLISH

Md. to weigh own 'DREAM' tuition act

Publication-Type: Newspaper

Subject: **TUITION** FEES (99%); IMMIGRATION (90%); EDUCATION SYSTEMS & INSTITUTIONS (90%); LEGISLATION (90%); LEGISLATIVE BODIES (90%); ILLEGAL IMMIGRANTS (89%); APPROVALS (89%); PRIMARY & SECONDARY EDUCATION (89%); US STATE GOVERNMENT (79%); US DEMOCRATIC PARTY (79%); US STATE IMMIGRATION LAW (78%); PUBLIC POLICY (78%); MUNICIPAL FINANCE (78%); IMMIGRATION LAW (78%); HIGH SCHOOLS (78%); GOVERNORS (78%); VETO (78%); POLITICAL PARTIES (77%); US PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATES 2016 (77%); POLITICAL DEBATES (77%); US FEDERAL GOVERNMENT (76%); GOVERNMENT BUDGETS (73%); EXECUTIVES (68%)

Organization: UNIVERSITY OF **MARYLAND** (57%)

Industry: EDUCATION SYSTEMS & INSTITUTIONS (90%); PRIMARY & SECONDARY EDUCATION (89%); HIGH SCHOOLS (78%); GOVERNMENT BUDGETS (73%); BUDGETS (73%)

Person: MARTIN O'MALLEY (59%)

Geographic: **MARYLAND**, USA (94%); NEW YORK, USA (79%); ARIZONA, USA (79%); NEBRASKA, USA (79%); TEXAS, USA (79%); ILLINOIS, USA (79%); CALIFORNIA, USA (79%); UNITED STATES (79%); LATIN AMERICA (76%)

Load-Date: December 30, 2010