

She can only DREAM Immig hopes bill frees school aid

Daily News (New York)

November 20, 2011 Sunday, SPORTS FINAL EDITION

Copyright 2011 Daily News, L.P.



Section: NEWS; Pg. 22

Length: 553 words

Byline: BY BEN CHAPMAN NEW YORK DAILY NEWS With Kenneth Lovett

Body

SAMANTHA GOT straight A's, high SAT scores and participated in extracurricular clubs and student government during her senior year in high **school**.

The hard work paid off - the East Harlem teen was accepted last spring to five top-tier liberal arts colleges, including her No. 1 choice, Wesleyan.

But her **hopes** of spending four years on the leafy Connecticut campus were dashed all because she couldn't afford the hefty tuition and her immigration status made her ineligible for financial **aid** at private universities.

"I was really lost. I didn't know what was going on. I was a mess," recalled Samantha, whose last name the Daily News is withholding at her request.

The whipsmart teen was born in Mexico and is among the 345,000 undocumented students in New York State.

Like her, many have attended the state's public elementary and high **schools** without reprisal, but their pursuit of college degrees at elite **schools** has been cut short by state and federal laws barring them from government grants and low-interest loans.

State education officials have been pushing to give more rights to immigrant kids since 2002, when they granted them in-state tuition discounts at public universities.

More recently, the state Board of Regents endorsed the federal Development, Relief and Education for Alien Minors (**DREAM**) Act in October, which would bestow resident status on immigrants who earn high **school** diplomas and go on to college.

And last Monday the Regents announced a new **bill** called the Education Equity for DREAMers Act, which would allow undocumented students to apply for state college tuition grants of \$5,000 for each **school** year.

In the meantime, Samantha enrolled at City College this fall as a cheaper alternative to her top choices. She is one of about 2,000 undocumented students in the CUNY system, according to official records.

Her family came to the U.S. in 1998 on a tourist visa and then stayed.

Samantha's father left two years later, leaving her mother as the sole provider. To save on costs, Samantha shares a room with her brother, and buys used textbooks and clothes.

She can only DREAM Immig hopes bill frees school aid

"I consider myself an American, and I want to be equal," said Samantha, who is still battling for citizenship in court.

"But I'm not equal. It's hard to swallow," she said.

For Samantha's mom, Margarita, who works 60 hours a week as a restaurant manager, coming to the U.S. was all about giving her children a better life.

"It's been my **dream** to have my children go to college," she said tearfully. "But I don't know how I will continue to afford it."

The Regents' **bill** hasn't been brought before the Legislature and is likely to encounter opposition from state Senate Republicans, said Sen Martin Golden (R-Brooklyn).

"This is a tough time for a **bill** like this. There's not even enough money right now to offset tuition costs for legal, documented New Yorkers," said Golden, who added that the **bill** would place a new burden on the state budget if passed.

Gov Cuomo hasn't taken a position on the **bill** yet, but he will review it, a spokesman said.

But Board of Regents Chancellor Merryl Tisch, who has spearheaded the **bill**, believes undocumented students deserve a chance at a college degree.

"The Board of Regents is very committed to allowing these undocumented youngsters to partake fully of the American **dream**," Tisch said.

bchapman@nydailynews.com

Graphic

Star high **school** student Samantha had the grades to get into a top-tier college, but could not afford the tuition. If a **bill** becomes law, undocumented immigrants like her could get financial **aid**. Photo by Chistie M. Farriella

Classification

Language: ENGLISH

Publication-Type: Newspaper

Subject: STUDENT ORGANIZATIONS (91%); SECONDARY **SCHOOLS** (91%); HIGH **SCHOOLS** (91%); IMMIGRATION (90%); IMMIGRATION OF MINORS (90%); COLLEGES & UNIVERSITIES (90%); STUDENTS & STUDENT LIFE (90%); EXTRA CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES (90%); TUITION FEES (90%); CHILDREN (89%); LEGISLATIVE BODIES (89%); US STATE GOVERNMENT (89%); PRIMARY & SECONDARY EDUCATION (78%); POLITICAL PARTIES (78%); EDUCATION SYSTEMS & INSTITUTIONS (78%); STUDENT FINANCIAL **AID** (78%); EDUCATION DEPARTMENTS (78%); CERTIFICATES, DEGREES & DIPLOMAS (78%); PUBLIC **SCHOOLS** (78%); CITIZENSHIP (77%); UNIVERSITY ADMINISTRATION (77%); US REPUBLICAN PARTY (76%); US FEDERAL GOVERNMENT (76%); IMMIGRATION LAW (76%); GRANTS & GIFTS (75%); TEXTBOOKS (73%); PASSPORTS & VISAS (71%); BOARDS OF DIRECTORS (70%)

She can only DREAM Immig hopes bill frees school aid

Industry: SECONDARY **SCHOOLS** (91%); HIGH **SCHOOLS** (91%); COLLEGES & UNIVERSITIES (90%); PRIMARY & SECONDARY EDUCATION (78%); EDUCATION SYSTEMS & INSTITUTIONS (78%); PUBLIC **SCHOOLS** (78%)

Geographic: NEW YORK, USA (79%); UNITED STATES (93%)

Load-Date: November 25, 2011

End of Document