

# DREAM SABBATH EVENT PLANNING



## Sample Press Release

### The DREAM Sabbath

Your organization Holds Event/Vigil/Mass, Date in Support of the DREAM Act and to ask President Obama to stop deporting innocent youth

*Your organization, a member of the Interfaith Immigration Coalition, will hold a candlelight vigil/press conference/holy mass etc in support of our immigrant youth working towards the American dream and to urge President Obama to stop detaining and deporting DREAM Act eligible youth*

**WHO:** Students, families and faith leaders with your city/organization, a member or the Interfaith Immigration Coalition. Students, families and clergy from \_\_\_\_who are (insert their involvement), including:

Insert names, brief bios of local spokespersons and clergy leaders

**WHAT:** “The DREAM Sabbath”: Your organization’s families, youth and clergy across the country will host candlelight vigils/events/masses etc in support of our immigrant youth and to pray for the deliberations of President Obama and the administration, that they will show moral leadership and vision by protecting vulnerable populations including DREAM Act eligible youth from detention and deportation

**WHEN:** Time and Date

**WHERE:** Location

**VISUALS:** Clergy, students and families with candles and signs saying “ready to serve,” “I want to be a teacher, nurse, doctor,” “Please don’t deport me to a country I’ve never known,” etc.

**More Information:** Thousands of hard working young people who were brought to the United States as infants or children can be locked up in federal detention centers and deported to a country they’ve never known. The DREAM Act would stop the injustice by giving students who have grown up and graduated high school in the United States the opportunity to earn legal status through college or military service. Meanwhile, President Obama and the administration has the executive authority to protect DREAM Act eligible students and undocumented parents of citizen children from the threat of detention and deportation. As people of faith, we support the DREAM Act because we believe in protecting the dignity of every human being, allowing everyone their God given potential.

### BACKGROUND ON PARTICIPATING ORGANIZATIONS

Background on your organization

Background on the IIC



## Sample Letter to Faith Leader

Dear Monsignor/Father/Pastor/Rev./Rabbi,

This letter is being written to elicit your participation in a “DREAM Sabbath” on (insert date and time here) which is being promoted by the Interfaith Immigration Coalition (IIC) in support of our DREAM Act eligible students and youth. It is the hope of the IIC that congregations across the country will plan events and/or masses, prayers and homilies in support of the DREAM Act and to urge President Obama to stop deporting innocent DREAM Act eligible students and youth.

We aspire to put a human face on an otherwise political issue through personal stories and testimonies and to educate our parishioners about this critical issue while continuing the call for the DREAM Act and pressuring the President to do more to protect DREAM youth from deportation. It is critical to ensure that our faith values are an essential component of the on-going dialogue surrounding the issue immigration reform in our nation and the moral call to support innocent and hardworking youth that are eligible for the DREAM Act. We are a country of immigrants seeking a way of life that is highlighted in our constitution and supported by our longstanding faith traditions here in the United States.

In that light, I ask for your help in making our “DREAM Sabbath” Friday/Saturday/Sunday a success that will help raise awareness about the DREAM Act while moving our country towards more humane and just immigration policies. The involvement of the faithful is essential for the success of this endeavor and could be a valuable tool in the process of inviting your constituents to understand, embrace and live out the Gospel tenets of this campaign.

Please go to <http://www.interfaithimmigration.org> for more information about the DREAM act and go to <http://bit.ly/fGgW8j> to sign a petition asking President Obama to stop deporting our DREAM Act eligible youth.

I thank you, once again, for your support.

Sincerely,



## Sample Invitation to Member of Congress

[DATE]

Dear Honored Member of Congress,

We would like to invite you to attend [NAME OF CONGREGATION or ORGANIZATION]'s worship service on [DATE] at [LOCATION]. During this service we will [hear testimony from a DREAM student and will remember DREAM students in our prayers] as part of DREAM Sabbath, a national project with hundreds diverse communities of faith from around the country participating to increase understanding of DREAM students' lives, and their hopes to attain full recognition of their contributions to our communities.

As you know, the DREAM Act was just 5 votes short of passage in the US Senate in December 2010. Communities of faith had joined DREAM students in fighting for the DREAM Act, and we shared their disappointment when the act failed to win cloture. But the success in building a majority of support inspired us to continue educating, organizing, praying and speaking out for the DREAM Act.

More importantly, we understand the crisis facing immigrant communities at this time, and we stand in solidarity with DREAM students and their families. President Obama has repeatedly stated that it "makes no sense" to deport responsible people who "could be further enriching out nation," and yet the Obama Administration continues to execute deportations at record levels, deporting thousands of young people who know no country other than the U.S. as their home, and who want nothing more than to contribute to this country's well-being as citizens.

DREAM students live with the understanding that they could be deported away from their families and their homes on any given day. They have every reason to live in fear, withdrawing from their community and the world, and yet they have proven themselves to be people of profound faith, modeling for us what it means to trust God and live in the spirit of the Psalmist's confession:

*In God I trust and am not afraid.  
What can mere mortals do to me?  
(Psalm 56:4)*

We hope you will join us on [DATE] to learn more about the reality of DREAM students' lives, and to pray with them for our country and for moral courage for our elected leaders, including President Obama and Congress, to address the immigration crisis through just, humane and courageous leadership.

[TITLE/DESCRIPTION OF EVENT]

[DATE]

[LOCATION]

[ORGANIZING SPONSORS]



## **DREAM Sabbath Events**

### **Sample Agenda and Elements of a Powerful Event**

**There are several key components you may want to include in your agenda that can help ensure your event is meaningful and powerful including:**

1. **An opening and closing prayer and/or reflection** that deeply connects to the moral call to support immigrants and our DREAM Act eligible youth. Make sure that this prayer and/or reflection brings significance, values and the prophetic voice to the work we are doing to support our immigrant brothers and sisters.
2. **Credential & Purpose** – Who you are (your congregation, group or committee), what you are doing (working in partnership with the IIC) and why (in support of the DREAM Act and to protect DREAM Act eligible students from detention and deportation etc.)
3. **Testimonies/ Stories** – Find at least 2 or 3 DREAM Act eligible youth or friends and allies (teachers, pastors, social workers etc) who can publically share their personal stories about how this issue affects them at your event. Make sure they are prepared, that their testimonies will be brief (preferably under 2 minutes long) but will be heartfelt and will clearly depict the injustices that undermine core faith values. Connecting an otherwise political issue to a human face and a personal story can truly change hearts and minds. The human face of suffering may be some of the best education our parishioners can receive. However, we must make sure to protect people and let them know the risks that they may be taking if they choose to share their stories. It is important to give people options so they know they can change their names, speak behind a screen or have friends or family members share their stories on their behalf depending on what kinds of risks they want to take. The testimonies of our DREAM students and youth are often the most compelling for those that are on the fence regarding the immigration issue.
4. **Research, Messaging and Values** – Spend at least 3 to 5 minutes sharing the research and values that support why the DREAM Act will be good for families, communities, and our nation. Please click on the attached link to find a great deal of research and resources in support of the DREAM Act from why it will be good for the economy to faith values messaging:  
<http://www.piconetwork.org/page?id=0052>
5. **PINS (stands for what?)**– This is when you ask people with power if they will take a specific action to support your cause. It is always important to invite public officials, representatives and others that you want to support your cause to your event who have the power to help make the changes you are seeking. In this case, it will be optimal to invite you Members of Congress so that you can publically ask them if they will support the DREAM Act. It will also be fantastic if you could turn out some White House officials to ask them if they will work with you to stop the deportation of DREAM Act eligible students. However, there are also many local and state targets that can do more to support the DREAM Act or administrative relief as well. For example, you could ask your city council members, university presidents and/or state representatives to pass proclamations or resolutions in support of the DREAM Act and/or to send a letter to the President and the Administration urging them to stop deporting DREAM eligible youth. If they

agree, those types of actions will produce more media and will also further the public education and support for this issue. Be creative, think outside the box, and decide what pins make the most sense for your organization given your environment and your relationships.

6. **Call to Action** – It is always fantastic when you can get all the participants at the event to commit to taking action in support of the work you are doing. The simplest asks might include asking everyone go to sign onto a letter or a petition in support of the DREAM Act; or urging the President to protect DREAM students from deportation. A step beyond this might include asking participants to call, write letters or even visit with their representatives to garner more support for our DREAM youth. A more committed call to action might include asking everyone to sign up to join an immigration committee that will meet on a monthly basis in support of Immigrants (If this is something your group or organization could commit to facilitating).
  
7. **Closing Prayer and/or Reflection** as described in #1

\*Do not hesitate to be creative and include music, poetry, skits and all ages and backgrounds into the planning and pieces of your agenda.

To encourage leadership development and to truly engage the community, we often have several different people take different pieces of the agenda, while one person is the main chair or sometimes we have co-chairs that open and close the event. This creates ownership, unity, inclusivity and teaches ordinary people how to be powerful in a public way within their communities. It is also much more exciting to see real people from the community take these roles and show their leadership. The small mistakes and imperfections are what make us human and special. However, with practice and preparation (make sure to practice the entire agenda at least once or twice with everyone that is participating), this will not take away from the power of what is being presented, but will make it real, genuine, more meaningful and even sacred. Thank you for your participation in the DREAM Sabbath events!



## DREAM Sabbath Sample Vigil Program

The purpose of a vigil is to engage participants in communal prayer and action around specific concerns. A vigil can be as simple as a circle of ten people gathered to hold candles and pray for 20 minutes, or may be a more formal program with speakers and music. Below is one example of how a vigil might be ordered, but your program may look very different—consider the resources within your community or core planning group (an exceptional church choir or cantor, local poet, sign language translator, artist, etc.), and use them to plan your vigil program.

- I. **Welcome**—a few words about the focus and purpose of your vigil. Why now? What’s the concern? Who’s affected? What values shape your faith traditions’ response to these concerns?
  - a. This may take the form of brief comments from one of your speakers or the “emcee” of your vigil, or may consist of a few words of welcome, then an opening prayer that lifts up the central concerns of your vigil.
- II. **Song**—You might invite a church choir or an instrumentalist to provide appropriate music, or simply recruit a few strong singers to lead participants in singing.
- III. **Reading**—*for ideas see suggested readings below.*
- IV. **Speaker**—a DREAM student or ally; pastor, rabbi, imam or lay leader
- V. **Prayer**—One person may lead the prayers, or you might invite several faith leaders to pray according to their traditions. Involve vigil participants in praying a refrain throughout your prayer time. Consider offering prayers in multiple languages.
- VI. **Song**
- VII. **Speaker**—a DREAM student or ally; pastor, rabbi, imam or lay leader
- VIII. **Closing**—reiterate the focus and purpose of your vigil. At this time you might also invite vigil participants to join your group at a future event.