

# US risks creating uneducated 'underclass': study

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WASHINGTON — The United States will create a new Hispanic underclass unless it improves immigrant children's access to education, a report released Wednesday warned.

The Future of Children report, a collaborative effort between Princeton University and the Brookings Institution, calls for the United States to improve immigrants' education from preschool to university, including by passing the controversial Development, Relief and Education for Alien Minors (DREAM) Act.

"If we don't do something about Hispanic education, we're going to have a permanent underclass in the United States. We already have one; it won't help us to have two," said Ron Haskins, a senior fellow at the Brookings Institution and lead author of the report, along with Princeton professor Marta Tienda.

"This is a serious problem. We have a group of immigrant children who are seriously deprived because they have so little education," he said.

The DREAM Act would give a six-year resident's permit to high school graduates who came to the United States illegally, and allow them to pay the much cheaper residents' tuition rates or obtain a scholarship to attend a US university.

It would affect some 55,000 immigrant youths who were brought to the United States illegally by their parents and have been through the public school system only to find college off-limits to them because of their legal status and the high tuition fees.

Backers of the DREAM Act say the United States should encourage youths to pursue a higher education as a key to their own and the country's economic success.

But opponents say it would send a message to migrants that it was acceptable to come to the United States illegally, and should not be passed without a thorough reform of US immigration rules.

Around a quarter of the 75 million children currently in the United States are immigrants and five million of them have one or both parents who are in the United States illegally, says the Future of Children.

Large numbers of immigrant children, particularly those from Latin America, grow up in poverty and "a substantial percentage of these children are falling behind in school," the report says.

For the thousands of immigrant youths who are in the country illegally but doing well in elementary and high school, there is no guarantee of getting a university education under the current US rules.

And in today's economy, a university education is vital to getting getting a well-paid job and integrating into society, the report says.

First introduced in Congress in 2001, the DREAM Act was passed by the House of Representatives in December but was blocked by the Senate.



The US risks creating a Hispanic underclass unless it improves immigrant access to education, according to a report.

## Map

