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## NJ immigration under Murphy: Expanding in-state financial aid

[Steph Solis, @stephsolis](#) Published 5:00 a.m. ET Jan. 2, 2018

Sgt.  
Chris  
Gunn



(Photo: Peter Ackerman)

This is a look into New Jersey Gov.-elect Phil Murphy's immigration proposals. Click through to see them all.

**NEXT: [New Jersey, the sanctuary state? \(/story/news/politics/new-jersey/2017/12/30/new-jersey-governor-phil-murphy-immigrants-sanctuary-state/950236001/\)](#)**

The governor-elect supports expanding in-state financial aid to young unauthorized immigrants living in New Jersey.

These immigrants who were brought to the country as children, also known as DREAMers, have spent years lobbying for these benefits at New Jersey's public colleges.

Among the most vocal has been Giancarlo Tello, an activist with the New Jersey Dream Act Coalition. Tello, an unauthorized immigrant from Peru, who didn't qualify for in-state tuition or financial aid. He once [told reporters \(http://www.njspotlight.com/stories/13/12/20/dream-act-passes-grants-in-state-tuition-to-undocumented-immigrants/?p=all\)](http://www.njspotlight.com/stories/13/12/20/dream-act-passes-grants-in-state-tuition-to-undocumented-immigrants/?p=all) he left Bergen Community College because he couldn't afford tuition.

The coalition garnered enough support to get the New Jersey Dream Act passed. Gov. Chris Christie signed a version of the bill that offered in-state tuition to unauthorized immigrants living in-state as well as New Jersey natives whose families recently moved out-of-state.

But he vetoed the section granting these students in-state financial aid.

In Tello's case, he completed his associate's degree and went onto Rutgers University. He also received protections under the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals program.

That's not to say he and other DACA recipients didn't struggle with the cost.

"It took me four years to get an associates, and it will take me another 2.5 years to get a bachelor's because I am a part-time student," said Daniela Velez, a DACA recipient from Venezuela and a member of the advocacy group UndocuJersey.

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Daniela Velez of UndocuJersey protested outside of Rep. Tom MacArthur's office in Toms River in November. She was part of a group of hunger strikers who called on him to support the Dream Act of 2017 without adding border security or deportation measures. (Photo: Peter Ackerman)

Velez attends Rutgers University part-time and juggles multiple jobs. She recently launched a business selling lab kits for physics and astronomy courses.

## DREAMers and the financial aid pool

Assemblyman Declan O'Scanlon (R-Monmouth) said in 2014 that he couldn't "vote to dilute the already shallow pool of student aid that we have right now for documented people," according to [NJ.com](http://www.nj.com/politics/index.ssf/2014/12/nj_democrats_forge_ahead_with_plan_for_unauthorized_immigrant_students_to_be_eligible_for_financial.htm) ([http://www.nj.com/politics/index.ssf/2014/12/nj\\_democrats\\_forge\\_ahead\\_with\\_plan\\_for\\_unauthorized\\_immigrant\\_students\\_to\\_be\\_eligible\\_for\\_financial.htm](http://www.nj.com/politics/index.ssf/2014/12/nj_democrats_forge_ahead_with_plan_for_unauthorized_immigrant_students_to_be_eligible_for_financial.htm))

It's unclear whether he stands by that argument. A representative for his office said he was unavailable for comment.

Policy analyst Erika Nava, who was a lead researcher backing the New Jersey Dream Act before it passed, said critics often assume that expanding financial aid eligibility would mean granting all DREAMers need-based aid. Not all New Jersey DREAMers qualify as low-income.

She believes the benefits of an educated workforce outweigh any concerns of perceived cost increases.

"When you have a more educated population, it helps everyone," she said. "You're likely to qualify for better-paying jobs and thus pay higher taxes."

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