

PRESIDENTS' ALLIANCE | ON HIGHER EDUCATION AND IMMIGRATION

March 2, 2021

United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senators:

On behalf of the Presidents' Alliance on Higher Education and Immigration, we write to express our full support of the bipartisan Dream Act of 2021 (S.264), which would provide relief for DACA (Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals) recipients and other Dreamers, introduced by Senators Graham (R-SC) and Durbin (D-IL). As higher education leaders, we believe it is our nation that will benefit from the passage of this bipartisan legislation that permanently protects upwards of 1.7 million Dreamers and establishes a roadmap to citizenship for this population of talented, hardworking, achievement-oriented individuals. We urge you to support this important legislation.

The struggles and contributions of our Dreamer students, staff and alumni have played out in our institutions. They inspire us by what they have overcome and the promise they hold to make our communities and country stronger. These individuals—Americans in every sense but one—seek only what we want for all our children: the opportunity to pursue their studies, work in our communities, serve in the military, and contribute to their families, states, and nation. A roadmap to citizenship for Dreamers during the ongoing pandemic is particularly critical, as 202,500 DACA recipients are currently employed as essential workers keeping our country fed, safe, clean, and healthy on the front lines of responding to COVID-19.¹

I. THE PRESIDENTS' ALLIANCE ON HIGHER EDUCATION AND IMMIGRATION

As a nonpartisan, nonprofit organization, the Presidents' Alliance on Higher Education and Immigration brings the voice and perspectives of college and university presidents to the discussion of immigration issues that impact higher education, our students, campuses, communities, and nation. We work to inform and advance immigration policies and practices at the federal, state, and campus level that are consistent with our heritage as a nation of immigrants and the academic values of access, equity and the opportunity for all learners to rise as high as their talents will take them. The Alliance is composed of over 500 presidents and chancellors of public and private colleges and universities, enrolling over five million students in 43 states, D.C., and Puerto Rico.

¹ Nicole Prchal Svajlenka, *A Demographic Profile of DACA Recipients on the Frontlines of the Coronavirus Response*, Center for American Progress, April 6, 2020, <https://www.americanprogress.org/issues/immigration/news/2020/04/06/482708/demographic-profile-daca-recipients-frontlines-coronavirus-response/>.

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II. DREAMERS SHAPE OUR CAMPUSES, COMMUNITIES, AND NATION

There are over 640,000 DACA recipients in the United States. Under the DREAM Act, it is estimated that upwards of 1.7M DACA recipients and other Dreamers would be eligible for legal permanent residence. A total population of close to three million undocumented youth and young adults would be potential beneficiaries, including nearly one million who could become eligible if they enroll in school.² Critically, over a quarter million U.S. citizen children have one or more parents with DACA.³ They are our neighbors and co-workers, and they contribute to our communities annually, including:

- \$566.9 million in mortgage payments;
- \$2.3 billion in rental payments;⁴
- \$5.6 billion in federal taxes;
- \$3.1 billion in state and local taxes;
- \$24 billion in spending power to their local communities.⁵

In education, Dreamers comprise a variety of domestic immigrant students, including students with DACA and other undocumented immigrant students. An estimated 98,000 undocumented students graduate from U.S. high schools annually.⁶ Over 427,000 undocumented students are enrolled in higher education institutions, including 181,000 DACA-eligible individuals.⁷ We witness daily the contributions these students make to our campuses and communities, along with their commitment, resilience, and determination. These students are working diligently to advance themselves, including at the doctoral and professional degree level, notwithstanding the uncertainty they live with regarding whether they will be able to complete their education, much less start careers and families and make a life in the United States.

We gratefully note that there is strong, bipartisan support for Dreamers across our nation, including for Congress to pass legislation establishing a roadmap to citizenship for Dreamers. In a February 2021 Quinnipiac poll, 83 percent of all Americans (and 66 percent of Republicans) favored “allowing undocumented immigrants who were brought to the U.S. as children to remain in the United States and eventually apply for citizenship.”⁸ Moreover, according to PRRI

² Jeanne Batalova and Michael Fix, A Deeper Look at the DREAMers Who Could Feature in the Legalization Debate in Congress, Migration Policy Institute, February 2021,

<https://www.migrationpolicy.org/news/dreamers-who-could-feature-legalization-debate>

³ Nicole Prechal Svajlenka, *What We Know About the Demographic and Economic Impacts of DACA Recipients: Spring 2020 Edition*, April 6, 2020,

<https://www.americanprogress.org/issues/immigration/news/2020/04/06/482676/know-demographic-economic-impacts-daca-recipients-spring-2020-edition/>.

⁴ Svajlenka, *What We Know*, 2020.

⁵ *Id.*

⁶ Jie Zong and Jeanne Batalova, How Many Unauthorized Immigrants Graduate from U.S. High Schools Annually, Migration Policy Institute, April 2019,

<https://www.presidentsalliance.org/migration-policy-institute-fact-sheet-on-number-of-dreamers-graduating-from-high-school/>.

⁷ *Undocumented Students in Higher Education: How Many Students are in U.S. Colleges and Universities, and Who Are They?*, Presidents' Alliance on Higher Education and Immigration and New American Economy, March 2021,

<https://www.presidentsalliance.org/report-undocumented-students-in-higher-education-how-many-students-are-in-u-s-colleges-and-universities-and-who-are-they/>.

⁸ Press Release, 61% Optimistic About Next Four Years With Biden in Office, Quinnipiac University National Poll Finds; 68% of Americans Support the \$1.9 Trillion Stimulus Relief Bill, Quinnipiac University Poll, Feb. 3, 2021,

https://poll.qu.edu/images/polling/us/us02032021_uszn68.pdf.

polling, support for allowing Dreamers to gain legal resident status has steadily increased over the years.⁹

III. CONCLUSION

We appreciate your many efforts on behalf of our nation's colleges and universities and the students and communities we serve, including the immigrant and international students who are vital members of our campus and local communities. We sincerely hope you will support an important segment of those students who contribute much to our campuses, communities, and economy by supporting the Dream Act of 2021. A permanent, legislative roadmap to citizenship will ensure that these young students have the opportunity to access higher education and contribute to their fullest potential to the only nation many of them have ever called home.

We would welcome the opportunity to tell you more about why we support this and other needed reforms that would provide critical relief to the larger undocumented population; enhance our capacity to support and resettle refugees; and modernize our immigration system so that immigrant and international students and their families can fully contribute to our nation's well being. We are eager to work with you on these important issues. For any questions regarding the Alliance and its work, please contact Jose Magaña-Salgado, our Director of Policy and Communications, at jose@presidentsalliance.org.

Sincerely,



Miriam Feldblum
Executive Director
Presidents' Alliance on Higher
Education and Immigration

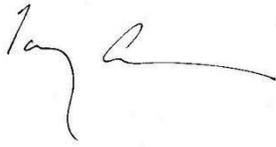


Louis Caldera
Co-chair and Senior Advisor,
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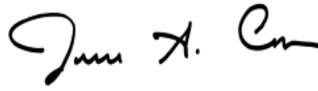


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⁹ Robert P. Jones, et al., Immigration After Trump: What Would Immigration Policy That Followed American Public Opinion Look Like?, PRRI, Jan. 2021, <https://www.prrri.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/PRRI-2021-Immigration-Post-Trump.pdf>.



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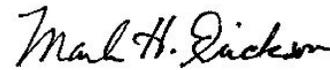
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