**Template Letter to the Congress on the Dream Act of 2021 for Higher Ed Institutions[[1]](#footnote-0)**

March 8, 2021

The Presidents’ Alliance developed this template letter to Congress, particularly the Senate, for institutions of higher education to adapt and send to Senate delegations in support of the Dream Act of 2021, which would codify Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) into law and provide a path to citizenship for certain undocumented immigrants with and without DACA who arrived in the United States at a young age. The Dream Act of 2021—identical to the [Dream Act of 2019](https://www.congress.gov/bill/116th-congress/senate-bill/874/text)—has been reintroduced to the Senate by Sens. Lindsey Graham (R-SC) and Dick Durbin (D-IL). The goal of this document is to provide a template for institutions to share their support for such legislation with your state delegations in the U.S. Senate, individually or as a coalition of institutions from your state.

We recommend the following steps:

1. **Draft.** You may wish to identify a small working group of public and private colleges and universities in your state and collaborate with them to customize the letter for your state by deleting this cover page and customizing the rest of the letter. If you prefer to send a letter as an individual institution, delete this cover page and customize the rest of the letter.

2. **Circulate.** Circulate the final draft letter to all higher educational institutions in your state inviting additional signatories. We are happy to assist with the circulation.

3. **Transmit.** Work with a government relations officer at one of the institutions or a state higher education association to transmit the final letter to all U.S. Senate Members who represent your state in Congress.

4. **Publicize.** Share the letter with the Presidents’ Alliance at [info@presidentsalliance.org](mailto:info@presidentsalliance.org) and publicly share the letter through a press statement, regular media, and social media.

Institutions can and should edit any portion of the below letter and should definitely edit and customize the terms in [brackets] and highlighted in yellow and customize the letter as much as you see fit.

**Note:** While this template uses the term “Dreamers,” many immigrant youth prefer to not use that term, opting for terms such as “immigrant youth” or “immigrants.” Student advocacy groups in your state may be able to provide useful guidance about the preferred language.

[Date]

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| The Honorable [Senator’s full name]  U.S. Senate  Washington, D.C. 20510 | The Honorable [Senator’s full name]  U.S. Senate  Washington, D.C. 20510 |

**RE: REQUEST FROM [STATE] HIGHER ED INSTITUTIONS TO CO-SPONSOR AND SUPPORT THE DREAM ACT OF 2021**

Dear Senators [surname] and [surname]:

On behalf of the undersigned higher education institutions, we write to respectfully urge you to cosponsor and vote for the Dream Act of 2021 (S.264), which would provide a roadmap to citizenship for upwards of 1.7 million Dreamers.[[2]](#footnote-1) Introduced by Senators Graham (R-SC) and Durbin (D-IL), this bipartisan bill represents a vital effort to provide relief to our [state] Dreamers. Our nation desperately needs legislation that permanently protects Dreamers and establishes a roadmap to citizenship. These individuals—Americans in every sense but on paper—seek to pursue their studies, work in our communities, serve in the military, and contribute to our state and nation.

As higher education leaders, we see the immense contributions that our immigrant and international students, scholars, staff, and faculty make on a daily basis to our campuses and communities. Protection for Dreamers during the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic is particularly critical, as 202,500 Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) recipients are currently employed as essential workers keeping our country fed, safe, clean, and healthy on the front lines of a global health crisis.[[3]](#footnote-2) The Dream Act of 2019 represents one of the most viable pieces of bipartisan immigration legislation, and the Senate should move forward on passing a clean version of the Dream Act without amendments. Finally, we encourage the Senate to maintain the current eligibility criteria for the bill and not narrow eligibility to a smaller number of Dreamers, which would only partially solve this issue and force future Congresses to deal with the remaining Dreamer population.

An estimated 98,000 undocumented students graduate from high school every year, including [number] in [state], representing [number] percent of graduating undocumented immigrants.[[4]](#footnote-3) There are approximately [number] DACA recipients in [state], with an additional [number] eligible to apply.[[5]](#footnote-4) Moreover, [number] U.S. citizen children in [state] have one or more parents with DACA.[[6]](#footnote-5) Nationally there are approximately 427,000 undocumented students enrolled in higher education institutions, including 181,000 DACA-eligible individuals.[[7]](#footnote-6) In [state], there are roughly [number] undocumented immigrants enrolled in institutions of higher education, representing [number] percent of all students in higher ed.[[8]](#footnote-7) Of these enrolled students, [number] are DACA-eligible individuals.[[9]](#footnote-8) These students areworking diligently to advance themselves, notwithstanding their uncertainty regarding whether they will be able to complete their education, much less remain and make a life in the United States.

[Specific examples/cases from your school or state that demonstrate why your institution supports this legislation, changing identifying information where appropriate to protect undocumented participants. Include information like the affected party (students, employees, alumni, etc.), their connection to your state/institution, what they stand to lose, and what you stand to lose without them.]

There is strong, bipartisan support for Dreamers and for Congress establishing a roadmap to citizenship. 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.”[[10]](#footnote-9) In fact, according to PRRI polling, support for allowing Dreamers to gain legal resident status has steadily increased over the years.[[11]](#footnote-10)

We appreciate your many efforts thus far to support higher education on behalf of our state and its immigrant and international students. We sincerely hope you will continue to support those who contribute so much to our campuses, communities, and economy.

We would welcome the opportunity to tell you more about why we support this and other needed reforms to modernize our immigration system so that our immigrant and international students can live freely and fully contribute to our communities and economy in [state]. We are eager to work with you on these important issues. For any questions or to follow up from this letter, please contact [name] of [institution] at [email] or [phone].

Sincerely,

[institutional signatories]

1. For questions regarding this template or general strategy, please contact [info@presidentsalliance.org](mailto:info@presidentsalliance.org). For policy or strategy questions on domestic students (e.g., Dreamers, TPS holders, and other immigrants), contact [jose@presidentsalliance.org](mailto:jose@presidentsalliance.org). For policy or strategy questions on international students and scholars, contact [jill@presidentsalliance.org](mailto:jill@presidentsalliance.org) or [miriam@presidentsalliance.org](mailto:miriam@presidentsalliance.org). For contact information for congressional offices and staff, contact [jose@presidentsalliance.org](mailto:jose@presidentsalliance.org). [↑](#footnote-ref-0)
2. Jessica Bolter, et al., Back on the Table: U.S. Legalization and the Unauthorized Immigrant Groups that Could Factor in the Debate, Migr. Pol’y Inst. 9 (2021), *available at* <https://www.migrationpolicy.org/research/us-legalization-unauthorized-immigrant-groups>. Dreamers consist of a variety of domestic students, including students with Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) and other undocumented immigrant students who arrived in the United States at a young age. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
3. Nicole Prchal Svajlenka, *A Demographic Profile of DACA Recipients on the Frontlines of the Coronavirus Response*, Ctr. for Am. Progress (Apr. 6, 2020), <https://www.americanprogress.org/issues/immigration/news/2020/04/06/482708/demographic-profile-daca-recipients-frontlines-coronavirus-response/>. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
4. [Refer to this source to include state-specific information, if available for your state]. Jie Zong & Jeanne Batalova, How Many Unauthorized Immigrants Graduate from U.S. High Schools Annually?, Migr. Pol’y Inst. (2019), *available at* <https://www.presidentsalliance.org/migration-policy-institute-fact-sheet-on-number-of-dreamers-graduating-from-high-school/>. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
5. [Refer to this source to include state-specific information.] Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) Data Tools, Migr. Pol’y Inst., (Sept. 30, 2020), <https://www.migrationpolicy.org/programs/data-hub/deferred-action-childhood-arrivals-daca-profiles>. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
6. [Refer to this source to include state-specific information.] Nicole Prchal Svajlenka, *What We Know About DACA Recipients*, by State, Center for American Progress, Sept. 12, 2019, <https://www.americanprogress.org/issues/immigration/news/2019/09/12/474422/know-daca-recipients-state/>. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
7. Pres.’ All. on Higher Educ. & Immigr. & New Am. Econ., Undocumented Students in Higher Education: How Many Students are in U.S. Colleges and Universities, and Who Are They? (2021), *available at* <https://www.presidentsalliance.org/report-undocumented-students-in-higher-education-how-many-students-are-in-u-s-colleges-and-universities-and-who-are-they/>. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
8. *Id.* [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
9. *Id.* [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
10. Quinnipiac Univ. Poll, 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 (Feb. 3, 2021), <https://poll.qu.edu/images/polling/us/us02032021_uszn68.pdf>. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
11. Robert P. Jones, et al., Pub. Religion Rsch. Inst., Immigration After Trump: What Would Immigration Policy That Followed American Public Opinion Look Like? (2021), *available at* <https://www.prri.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/PRRI-2021-Immigration-Post-Trump.pdf>. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)