

Statement for the Record of

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**Presidents' Alliance on Higher Education and Immigration**

**For a Hearing from the Committee on the Judiciary**

**H.R.6, American Dream and Promise Act of 2021**

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The nonpartisan, nonprofit Presidents' Alliance on Higher Education and Immigration brings college and university presidents and chancellors together on the immigration issues that impact higher education, our students, campuses, communities and nation. We work to advance just, common-sense 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 equity and openness. 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.

Approximately 11 million undocumented individuals live in the United States,<sup>1</sup> including the estimated 427,000 undocumented students in higher education, 181,000 of whom either have or are eligible for Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA).<sup>2</sup> Additionally, an estimated 98,000 undocumented students graduate from U.S. high schools annually.<sup>3</sup> Under the Dream and Promise Act as written in 2019, an estimated 2.5 million individuals could benefit; given that the 2021 version raises the age of entry cut off, the total number the bill could protect may be even higher.

In addition to permanent protections and a pathway to citizenship, the Dream and Promise Act's repeal of IIRIRA § 505 will enable more students to access in-state tuition.<sup>4</sup> Furthermore, the ability to adjust status will enable undocumented individuals to obtain professional and occupational licensure. This means that undocumented students will be able to pursue careers that fully utilize the skills that they acquire throughout their higher education and provide them with the ability to contribute to their communities. Occupational licensing is essential in allowing long-residing immigrant youth, students, and adult learners to fulfill their educational and employment aspirations, especially considering that over 1,100 professions (and about 25 percent of all workers) require licensing.<sup>5</sup>

There is strong bipartisan support for undocumented individuals across our nation, including for Congress to pass legislation establishing a roadmap to citizenship for Dreamers and, indeed, for all undocumented individuals to stay in the United States.<sup>6</sup> 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

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<sup>1</sup> *Profile of the Unauthorized Population: United States*, Migr. Pol'y Inst., <https://www.migrationpolicy.org/data/unauthorized-immigrant-population/state/US> (last accessed Apr. 26, 2021).

<sup>2</sup> Presidents' All. on Higher Educ. & Immigr. & New Am. Econ., *Undocumented Students in Higher Education: How Many Undocumented Students are in U.S. Colleges and Universities, and Who Are They? (2021)*, available at <https://www.higheredimmigrationportal.org/research/undocumented-students-in-higher-education-updated-march-2021/>.

<sup>3</sup> 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/>.

<sup>4</sup> American Dream and Promise Act of 2021, H.R. 6, 117th Cong. (2021).

<sup>5</sup> For more information about access to professional and occupational licensing, see *Legislative Principles*, Presidents' All. on Higher Educ. & Immigr., <https://www.presidentsalliance.org/about/legislative-principles/> (last visited June 14, 2021).

<sup>6</sup> Jens Manuel Krogstad, *Americans Broadly Support Legal Status for Immigrants Brought to the U.S. Illegally As Children*, Pew Rsch. Ctr. (June 17, 2020), <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2020/06/17/americans-broadly-support-legal-status-for-immigrants-brought-to-the-u-s-illegally-as-children/>.

States and eventually apply for citizenship.”<sup>7</sup> In fact, according to PRRI polling, support for allowing Dreamers to gain legal resident status has steadily increased over the years.<sup>8</sup>

As a coalition of presidents and chancellors from colleges and universities across the United States, we witness the daily contributions that undocumented students, including those with DACA and TPS, 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—withstanding 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.

A long-broken immigration system, combined with the prior administration’s actions and continuing fallout from the pandemic, have made these students and their educational and life prospects even more precarious. This is an enormous loss for all involved—students and their families, colleges and universities, and the U.S. economy and society. The United States advances when we remain true to our heritage as a land of opportunity for those who dream of a better life for themselves and their children. Today’s undocumented and other immigrant students are resilient and talented. They are ambitious—for themselves and the world—and they deserve fair, forward-looking, and common-sense immigration practices and pathways. Their futures depend on it, and so do ours.

Indeed, U.S. higher education and our national economy need the contributions and talents of undocumented students and their families, especially with the 2020 census showing U.S. population growth at its slowest in generations, with more declines projected. Providing a pathway to citizenship for DACA recipients and other undocumented individuals will serve multiple purposes, including filling critical human resource and labor market needs in our communities and states.

Congress should support these undocumented students and other immigrants who contribute so much to our campuses, communities, and economy by supporting the Dream and Promise Act of 2021 and by pledging not to include enforcement provisions in the bill text. A permanent, legislative roadmap to citizenship will ensure that these 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.

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<sup>7</sup> Press Release, Quinnipiac Univ. Poll, 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](https://poll.qu.edu/images/polling/us/us02032021_uszn68.pdf).

<sup>8</sup> Robert P. Jones, et al., Immigration After Trump: What Would Immigration Policy That Followed American Public Opinion Look Like?, Pub. Religion Rsch. Inst. (2021), *available at* <https://www.prrri.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/PRRI-2021-Immigration-Post-Trump.pdf>.