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November 4, 2021

United States House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Re: Vote Recommendation in Support of the Build Back Better Act

Dear Representative:

On behalf of the Presidents' Alliance on Higher Education and Immigration,¹ I write to urge you to vote **YES** on the Build Back Better Act, also known as the FY 2022 budget reconciliation legislation, especially in light of the legislation's provisions extending parole protections to upwards of eight million immigrants, including Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) recipients and Temporary Protected Status (TPS) holders, and expansion of federal financial aid to DACA and TPS holders.

Congress has a unique opportunity to provide essential and overdue protection for millions of long-residing immigrants in the United States and create a welcoming environment where immigrant and international students, scholars, and alumni can thrive. The bill's provisions would particularly help undocumented immigrant students and alumni. As higher education leaders, we witness the contributions of these individuals on a daily basis on our campuses and in our communities. The United States is home to approximately 427,000 undocumented students enrolled in higher education, representing about two percent of all students in postsecondary education in the United States. Of these, students with DACA or who are eligible for DACA constitute approximately 181,000 students, or nearly one percent of all students in higher education.² In addition, an estimated 98,000 undocumented students graduate from high school in the United States every year.³

¹ The nonpartisan, nonprofit [Presidents' Alliance on Higher Education and Immigration](https://www.higheredimmigrationportal.org) 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, forward-looking immigration policies and practices at the federal, state, and campus levels 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.

² *How Many Undocumented 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), available at <https://www.higheredimmigrationportal.org/research/undocumented-students-in-higher-education-updated-march-2021/>.

³ Jie Zong and Jeanne Batalova, *How Many Unauthorized Immigrants Graduate from U.S. High Schools Annually?*, Migration Policy Institute and Presidents' Alliance on Higher Education and Immigration (April 2019), available at <https://www.higheredimmigrationportal.org/research/migration-policy-institute-fact-sheet-on-number-of-dreamers-graduating-from-high-school/>.

We particularly support the inclusion of the proposed parole provisions, which would provide parole protections to undocumented immigrants who entered the United States before January 1, 2011 in the final reconciliation bill. The proposed language includes work authorization and protection from deportation for eligible foreign nationals for a period of five years, with the possibility to renew once for a total of ten years. This provision will provide work authorization and protection from deportation for approximately 7.1 million people in the United States.⁴ Moreover, these protections would enable parolees to be eligible for federal and state postsecondary benefits, including admissions to higher education institutions, eligibility for state and federal scholarships and federal financial aid, and other critical social safety net benefits. These benefits are crucial to help support higher ed accessibility and affordability, as well as student well-being and success.

We also support the provisions on the recapture of unused immigrant visas. The current visa backlog for family and employment-based visas is in the millions, and wait times in some categories stretch for decades.⁵ The provisions included in reconciliation would allow the United States to allocate over one million green cards previously authorized by Congress since 1992 and lost to bureaucracy.⁶ This is an important downpayment on a timely, reliable, and clear path to permanent legal status for college and university alumni, employees, and their families.

Finally, we strongly support the expansion of federal student aid eligibility. The FY2022 Budget Reconciliation expands federal student aid eligibility to include students who hold deferred action pursuant to the DACA policy or TPS. Access to federal financial aid will represent a key driver to dramatically expand higher education access to these immigrant students.

For questions regarding this vote recommendation, please contact Jose Magaña-Salgado at jose@presidentsalliance.org.⁷

Sincerely,



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

⁴ "Including Immigration Parole in Reconciliation Will Help Millions," Center for American Progress, Oct. 12, 2021, accessed Oct. 20, 2021, <https://www.americanprogress.org/issues/immigration/news/2021/10/12/506301/including-immigration-parole-reconciliation-will-help-millions/>.

⁵ "Visa Bulletin For October 2021," Bureau of Consular Affairs, U.S. Department of State, accessed Nov. 4, 2021, <https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/legal/visa-lawo/visa-bulletin/2022/visa-bulletin-for-october-2021.html>.

⁶ Jeremy L. Neufeld, *Recapturing Green Cards is a Trillion Dollar Reconciliation Opportunity*, Niskanen Center, Sept. 10, 2021, <https://www.niskanencenter.org/recapturing-unused-green-cards-is-a-trillion-dollar-reconciliation-opportunity/>.

⁷ For more information regarding the number of undocumented students enrolled in higher education or the economic impact of international students, please visit the Higher Ed Immigration Portal at <https://www.higheredimmigrationportal.org>.