



October 24, 2022

Dear Senator Romney:

On behalf of the undersigned Utah higher education institutions, we write to respectfully urge you to respond swiftly to the recent Fifth Circuit Court decision that jeopardizes the future of our undocumented immigrant students, faculty, and staff on campus. We always knew that the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program was a limited solution to the plight of these students and that Congress would ultimately need to provide a permanent solution for the hundreds of thousands of Dreamers who have grown up in America but lack a path to citizenship. The Senate must act now to reach a bipartisan compromise before the end of the year to provide permanent protection and a pathway to citizenship for DACA recipients, undocumented immigrant students, and other Dreamers.

As higher education leaders, we see Dreamers' immense contributions daily to our campuses and communities. Many of them have become not only highly valued employees but also employers, homeowners, military members, faith leaders, and founders of thriving businesses. More than 75 percent of DACA recipients in the workforce—nearly 350,000—were employed in jobs deemed essential by the U.S. Department of Homeland Security's Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency. We have invested in Dreamers for decades and paid for their education in public schools. If we want America to continue to benefit from Dreamers, Congress must act.

The Senate must reach a bipartisan compromise to ensure Dreamers can continue to stay and succeed in America, including the hundreds of thousands of undocumented immigrant students without DACA and the thousands locked out of the program. Over 400,000 undocumented immigrant students are pursuing higher education, launching careers, and contributing to their communities and states. At a time of labor shortages, with consequences ranging from inflation to diminished economic growth, we need to keep relying on the talents of the DACA workforce and other Dreamers. If and when DACA is eliminated, an estimated 1,000 U.S. jobs will be lost every business day over two years. We cannot afford to wait until the final blow is struck to this program by the courts.

Utah has a long history of championing immigration. Our state was founded through the legacy of immigrants in 1847, and its present-day pioneers account for nearly 100,000 Utah citizens. Utah has been at the forefront of higher education access for all students, including undocumented immigrant students. In 2001, Utah Senator Orrin Hatch co-sponsored the original DRAM Act. A year later, we became the third state to approve a non-resident tuition waiver for undocumented immigrant students. In 2017, Utah opened its first undocumented student resource center (USRC).

Approximately 100,000 undocumented immigrant students graduate from high school annually, and only a quarter of these students are estimated to be eligible for DACA. There are roughly 1,300 undocumented immigrant students enrolled in Utah's institutions of higher education, the majority of whom do not have DACA. These students are working 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.

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 Utah. We are eager to work with you. For any questions or to follow up on this letter, please contact Deneece G. Huftalin of Salt Lake Community College at Deneece.Huftalin@slcc.edu or (801) 957-4226.

Sincerely,

Deneece G. Huftalin
President
Salt Lake Community College

Stacey McCliff
Interim President
Snow College

Mindy Benson
President
Southern Utah University

Taylor R. Randall
President
University of Utah

Noelle E. Cockett
President
Utah State University

Richard B. Williams
President
Utah Tech University

Astrid S. Tuminez
President
Utah Valley University

Brad Mortensen
President
Weber State University