

# PRESIDENTS' ALLIANCE | ON HIGHER EDUCATION AND IMMIGRATION

## Americans Want Congress To Protect Dreamers This Year

November 2022

### Who are the Dreamers

- Dreamers are immigrants who **came to the United States as children**, lived and gone to school here, and in many cases identify as American.
- **Dreamers are part of the fabric of our country** and deserve to be recognized as the Americans they are.
- **Dreamers are American in every way, except on paper.** They came to the United States [on average at the age of 7](#), and have lived here for [an average of 22 years](#).
  - They grew up in American neighborhoods and went to American schools. Now, they are doctors, nurses, teachers, and engineers, many of whom are working in essential roles that helped respond and recover from the public health and economic crisis of COVID-19.
- **Having largely grown up in the United States, nearly half (45%) of DACA recipients live in [mixed-status families](#)**, meaning at least one member of their household is not a DACA recipient or an undocumented individual.
  - Nearly [one million U.S. citizens](#) live in households with a DACA recipient.
  - Nearly [one-fifth](#) (18%) of DACA recipients are married to a U.S. citizen spouse.
  - An estimated [590,000 U.S. citizen children](#) live with parents who are DACA recipients.
- **Dreamers are vital members of our communities.** We must create a humane immigration system that prioritizes keeping families safe and together.
- In the past ten years, **DACA has brought relief to nearly 800,000 immigrants** who came to the United States as children.

### Dreamers and the Economy

- **Dreamers are essential to a talented, educated workforce.**
  - At a time of [labor shortages](#), with consequences ranging from [inflation](#) to [diminished economic growth](#), we need the talents of the Dreamer workforce.
- **Dreamers are not just essential employees**, but have also become [homeowners](#), [military members](#), and founders of [thriving businesses](#).
- **The United States economy would be poorer without DACA** by more than a quarter of a trillion dollars.
  - The cost estimate of eliminating the DACA program and deporting its participants is [\\$283 billion over 10 years](#).
- **Over [400,000 undocumented](#) students are pursuing higher education**, launching careers, and contributing to their communities and states. Without providing these students a pathway to work authorization and permanent residence, America will not be able to truly benefit from their talent.
- **DACA recipients and their families annually contribute significantly to the nation's economy and finances.** DACA recipients' households [pay \\$6.2 billion in federal taxes and \\$3.3 billion in state and local taxes annually](#).

## Dreamers in Higher Education

- **A majority of undocumented students entering higher education are not eligible for DACA.**
  - Over [427,000 undocumented students](#) are enrolled in postsecondary education. Of these students, **less than half (181,000) are DACA-eligible.**
  - Nearly [100,000 undocumented students](#) are graduating high school annually, but only a quarter of them are estimated to be [eligible](#) for DACA.

## Importance of DACA & Dreamers

- **DACA has been transformative:** DACA has been one of the [most successful immigration initiatives](#) in modern history and demonstrates why expanded opportunities for Dreamers strengthen America.
- **Even so, it is not enough:** Having a temporary program constantly challenged in the courts has [negatively impacted](#) DACA recipients. Additionally, the [majority of undocumented students](#) in higher education and pursuing their studies and contributing to their campuses and communities lack DACA protections and opportunities. We need a strong bipartisan solution for DACA recipients and other Dreamers.
- **Contributions of all undocumented students, staff, and alumni:** The [overwhelming majority](#) of DACA recipients have graduated high school, and nearly half have attained some college education. [93% of surveyed DACA respondents](#) claimed that DACA enabled them to “pursue educational possibilities that [they] previously couldn’t.”

## Urgent Need for Permanent Relief

- **DACA’s days are numbered. Congress must provide a bipartisan solution to protect Dreamers now**—we can’t afford to lose hundreds of thousands of legal workers.
  - **DACA is in an incredibly precarious legal position**, and there is a very serious risk that the courts will fully strike down DACA in the coming months.
- **The end of DACA would hurt our nation's workforce and economy**, leading to unnecessary terminations, turnover costs by employers, and chaos as hundreds of thousands of employed individuals are forced to leave their jobs.
- **The end of DACA would spell collateral consequences for the roughly 600,000 current DACA holders**, including placing them at risk for deportation, undermining access to driver's licenses, and other critical benefits.
- **Legislation must also protect the hundreds of thousands of undocumented students graduating high school and on our college and university campuses without DACA.** It's time to build on the successes of DACA to also provide permanent protections to undocumented students who are not covered by DACA.
- **Now is the time to reach a bipartisan compromise**, as there is [broad support](#) across both parties for passing a permanent fix for Dreamers. We need a long-overdue bipartisan legislative solution for DACA recipients, other Dreamers and employers, campuses, and families.