Template Letter to Senators on Dream Legislation for Presidents’ Alliance Member Institutions and Partners¹

May 3, 2024

The Presidents’ Alliance developed this template letter for institutions of higher education and partner organizations to communicate with their Senate delegation about the urgent need for bipartisan congressional action for Dreamers — both with and without DACA.

On Wednesday, May 8, 2024, the Senate will hold a hearing on the urgent need to protect Dreamers, highlighting the critical role Dreamers play in fueling economic growth, meeting workforce demands, and nurturing talent development across various sectors. This hearing takes place amidst ongoing legal challenges to the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program and the resulting obstacles facing DACA recipients and DACA-eligible individuals. The hearing is further contextualized by recent Congressional negotiations on immigration that did not include protections for Dreamers. The hearing presents an opportunity to refocus attention on Dreamers and to emphasize the importance of including Dream legislation in future compromises.

The Presidents’ Alliance is providing this template letter and the appended talking points to support higher education leaders and partners who wish to communicate the importance of providing permanent protections to Dreamers in the lead-up to the hearing. This template does not discuss any particular legislation. Instead, it focuses on urging senators to act swiftly to reach a bipartisan compromise to provide protection and a pathway to citizenship for Dreamers.

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 context. We have marked a few places for customization in [brackets] and highlighted in yellow, but you may wish to incorporate additional details as appropriate.

Note: Defining “Dreamers”: This template uses the term “Dreamers” because it is the term most used in national advocacy. However, we recognize that undocumented students on your campus may prefer terms such as “DACA/undocumented” students, DACA recipients, unDACAmented, “immigrant youth,” or “immigrants.” We use the term “Dreamers” to convey the broadest and most comprehensive population needing immigration relief. “Dreamers” are undocumented immigrants who arrived in the United States as minors. According to the Migration Policy Institute (MPI), there are an estimated 3 million “Dreamers” who live in the United States. Dreamers can have DACA, TPS, be fully undocumented or be in limbo status.

¹ For questions regarding this template or general strategy, please contact diego@presidentsalliance.org.
[Date]

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

RE: TIME-SENSITIVE REQUEST FROM [INSTITUTION] TO SUPPORT PERMANENT PROTECTIONS FOR DREAMERS

Dear Senator [surname]:

On behalf of [name of your institution or, if sending on behalf of a group, “the undersigned higher education institutions”], we write to thank you for your dedication to working toward bipartisan compromise on the subject of “Dreamers” and to encourage you to attend the forthcoming Judiciary Hearing on this topic, “Dream Deferred: The Urgent Need to Protect Immigrant Youth.”

This hearing presents a long-overdue opportunity to highlight the contributions of the Dreamer population and to emphasize the importance of facilitating permanent protections for all Dreamers, including those with and without Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) or Temporary Protected Status (TPS). Dreamers, who have grown up in the United States and are attending or have graduated from American colleges and universities, are integral to our country’s success. An immigration compromise that leaves out Dreamers is counter-productive to our national economic and security interests and puts our communities at risk of losing a vital source of talent.

As higher education leaders [or specific to your institution], we see the immense contributions Dreamers make on a daily basis to our campus and community. Dreamers are pursuing and graduating from programs in STEM, healthcare, and teaching, fields that face severe labor shortages, and pursuing employment in these and other high-needs sectors. Current DACA recipients form a key part of the higher ed workforce, serving as faculty, staff, and administrators on campuses across the country. [Specific examples/cases from your school or state that demonstrate the important role Dreamers can/do play as leaders on your campus].

The DACA program has allowed Dreamers to demonstrate the immense contributions they can make when provided with access to protections and work authorization. Dreamers who graduate from college have become not only highly valued employees, but also impactful employers, homeowners, military personnel, faith leaders, and founders of thriving businesses. DACA recipients contribute almost $2.1 billion to Social Security and Medicare annually and unleash a wave of entrepreneurship. However, of the approximately 400,000 undocumented students currently enrolled in colleges and universities, the majority do not have DACA. This represents a significant loss of talent and revenue that imperils our nation’s economic interests, potentially costing the U.S. economy over $280 billion in the next decade alone. Expanding access to permanent protections to all Dreamers, including those with and without DACA or TPS, stands to make a significant impact not only on the higher education sector, but on the nation’s economy as a whole.

[Specific examples/cases that demonstrate the important role Dreamers can/do play in meeting workforce needs in your state].
Dreamers’ success is our country’s success. At a time of severe labor shortages, with consequences ranging from inflation to diminished economic growth, we must invest in the existing talent of the Dreamer population and provide opportunities for them to apply their skills and dedication as full members of American society. As Dreamers thrive, so too will their families, communities, and the nation. This judiciary hearing provides an opportunity to refocus attention on Dreamers and to emphasize the importance of including Dream legislation in future bipartisan compromises.

We recognize the challenges of reaching a compromise on such a difficult issue, understanding that individuals with sincere intentions may have differing opinions on various aspects of immigration policy. We thank you for your dedication to this topic and stand ready and eager to work with you by providing valuable insights, resources, and expertise.

For any questions or to follow up from this letter, please contact [name] of [institution] at [email] or [phone].

Sincerely,

[institutional signatories]