AICU | MASS
ASSOCIATION OF INDEPENDENT COLLEGES & UNIVERSITIES IN MASSACHUSETTS

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November 21, 2022

The Honorable Edward Markey
U.S. Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Elizabeth Warren
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Markey and Senator Warren,

On behalf of the AICU Mass Board of Directors and the 59 college and university members that comprise the Association of Independent Colleges and Universities of Massachusetts (AICU Mass), I write to respectfully urge you to respond swiftly to the recent devastating Fifth Circuit Court decision that jeopardizes the future of our undocumented students, faculty, and staff on campus.

It was always considered that the 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 students, and other Dreamers.

As higher education leaders, we see the immense contributions Dreamers make 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. During the height of the pandemic, 27,000 DACA recipients received continued work authorization, on the front lines as health care practitioners and supporting occupations.

In Massachusetts, there are approximately 8,120 DACA recipients and 1,300 U.S. citizen children who have a parent with DACA status.(1) The Migration Policy Institute estimates that over 1.3 million individuals are immediately eligible for DACA, including 17,000 in our state.3 DACA recipients in our state pay $92.6 million in federal taxes and $37.2 million in state and local taxes and have a spending power of $296.5 million.(2) Their economic and civic contributions, of course, increase significantly with the completion of a higher education degree. Their loss of DACA status would translate to a loss for our state's economy.

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 students without DACA and the thousands who have been unfairly locked out of the program. Over 400,000 undocumented 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 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.

Thank you for your continued support on behalf of the Commonwealth and our Dreamers. I sincerely hope you will continue to support these aspiring Americans who contribute so much to our economy and communities. I welcome the opportunity to tell you more about why AICU Mass and its member institutions stand with Dreamers, and to work with you on this important issue.

Sincerely,

Marisa J. Kelly
President
Suffolk University
(Chair of the AICU Mass Board of Directors)

Robert J. McCarron
President and CEO
AICU Mass

1 https://www.americanprogress.org/issues/immigration/news/2019/09/12/474422/know-daca-recipients-state/

2 https://www.americanprogress.org/issues/immigration/news/2019/09/12/474422/know-daca-recipients-state/