

March 21, 2023

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy  
Speaker of the House  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Chuck Schumer  
Majority Leader  
U.S. Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Hakeem Jeffries  
Minority Leader  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Mitch McConnell  
Minority Leader  
U.S. Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Speaker McCarthy, Majority Leader Schumer, Minority Leader Jeffries, and Minority Leader McConnell:

On behalf of the undersigned organizations, we urge you to enact legislation that provides permanent protections for “Dreamers” who came to the U.S. as children, built their lives here, and are American in every way except for their immigration status. Their contributions to the U.S. health and biomedical workforce are invaluable, particularly to the individual patients they serve on a daily basis, but are threatened by judicial uncertainty and regulatory impermanence.

Currently, 34,000 Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) recipients – physicians, nurses, dentists, and many others - provide health care to patients in communities across the nation.<sup>1</sup> Meanwhile, the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) estimates that 99 million Americans live in primary care Health Professional Shortage Areas (HPSAs), 70 million live in dental health HPSAs, and 158 million live in mental health HPSAs.<sup>2</sup> To put it in perspective, at least 17,000 primary care practitioners, 12,000 dental health practitioners, and 8,000 mental health practitioners would be needed to serve these areas to eliminate their shortage designation.<sup>3</sup> In light of these nationwide health workforce shortages, the DACA program and its corresponding work authorizations are critical to retaining and expanding our nation’s health workforce and health care capacity.

Recent court rulings have left the DACA program in legal limbo. Last year, the Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals upheld a ruling by a Texas federal district court that blocks new requestors from attaining DACA.<sup>4</sup> On January 30, a coalition of nine states asked the same Texas federal district court to end the program. Conversely, national organizations representing a wide range of health professional education groups filed a [2019 amicus brief to the U.S. Supreme Court in](#)

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<sup>1</sup> [“New CAP Data Confirm DACA Is a Positive Force For Recipients and Their Families”](#) Center for American Progress, November 2021

<sup>2</sup> [Health Workforce Shortage Areas](#), Health Resources and Services Administration, February 2023

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>4</sup> [Texas v. United States \(2022\)](#), U.S. Court of Appeals for the Fifth Circuit

[support of DACA](#). The fate of DACA in the courts remains unclear – as such, Congress must act to provide the permanent stability to the Dreamers who have earned a pathway to citizenship.

Since the Dream Act’s first introduction in 2001, there have been bipartisan efforts to authorize protections for Dreamers. Senators Dick Durbin (D-Ill.) and Lindsey Graham (R-S.C.) reintroduced this bipartisan bill in the 118<sup>th</sup> Congress and called on Congress to provide Dreamers a permanent pathway to citizenship. Despite support from 85 percent of Americans, including almost 75 percent of Republicans, Congress has yet to pass such a solution.<sup>5</sup> Passing legislation with permanent protections would allow 34,000 health care workers and nearly 600,000 current DACA recipients to continue their current education, training, research, and employment.<sup>6</sup>

Health professionals with DACA encompass a diverse, multiethnic population, who are often bilingual and more likely to practice in rural and underserved communities. They are practitioners who provide a tremendous resource to patients who often have challenges with access to health care services or with communication barriers. According to a 2019 survey of Dreamers interested in health careers, 97% expressed plans to ultimately work in the neighborhoods in which they grew up, or other underserved areas.<sup>7</sup> That number is consistent with other studies demonstrating that individuals who are underrepresented in health professions are twice as likely to pursue careers working with underserved populations. DACA recipients already serve in nursing, psychiatry, medicine, dentistry, research, and other frontline health professions, all of whom protect and care for our most vulnerable patients in different communities across the nation.<sup>8,9</sup> Indeed, the positive impact of DACA recipients in health care spans all 50 states and the District of Columbia.

Our organizations are dedicated to strengthening our nation’s health and biomedical workforce to improve health outcomes for all and meet the unique, often unmet needs of patients in communities across the country. Retaining the DACA program helps us reach those goals and supports the health workforce during a time when we can ill-afford to lose valuable, well-trained, and qualified personnel. We urge Congress to provide Dreamers with an opportunity to earn lawful permanent residence in the 118<sup>th</sup> Congress.

Thank you for your continued support of our health workforce, and all who comprise it.

Sincerely,

Academic Pediatric Association  
Alliance for Academic Internal Medicine  
AMDA - The Society for Post-Acute and Long-Term Care Medicine

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<sup>5</sup> [“Congress needs to create a pathway to residency for dreamers”](#) Americans for Prosperity, January 2022

<sup>6</sup> [Count of Active DACA Recipients](#), U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, September 2022

<sup>7</sup> [“Breaking More Barriers Survey Report”](#) Pre-Health Dreamers, September 2019

<sup>8</sup> [Count of Active DACA Recipients](#), U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, September 2022

<sup>9</sup> [“A Demographic Profile of DACA Recipients on the Frontlines of the Coronavirus Response”](#) Center for American Progress, April 2020

American Academy of Allergy, Asthma & Immunology  
American Academy of Family Physicians  
American Academy of Hospice and Palliative Medicine  
American Academy of Neurology  
American Academy of Pediatrics  
American Association for Dental, Oral, and Craniofacial Research  
American Association of Colleges of Nursing  
American Association of Colleges of Pharmacy  
American Association of Colleges of Podiatric Medicine  
American Association of Veterinary Medical Colleges  
American Board of Medical Specialties  
American College of Academic Addiction Medicine (ACAAM)  
American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists - Alliance for Innovation on Maternal Health  
American College of Physicians  
American College of Rheumatology  
American Council of Academic Physical Therapy  
American Dental Education Association  
American Geriatrics Society  
American Neurological Association  
AOTA - American Occupational Therapy Association  
American Osteopathic Association  
American Pediatric Society  
American Psychiatric Association  
American Psychological Association  
American Public Health Association  
American Society for Biochemistry and Molecular Biology  
American Society for Clinical Laboratory Science  
American Society for Clinical Pathology  
America's Essential Hospitals  
Association of Accredited Naturopathic Medical Colleges  
Association of American Indian Physicians  
Association of American Medical Colleges  
Association of Chiropractic Colleges  
Association of Departments of Family Medicine  
Association of Family Medicine Residency Directors  
Association of Maternal & Child Health Programs  
Association of Medical School Pediatric Department Chairs  
Association of Minority Health Professions Schools  
Association of Pathology Chairs  
Association of Schools Advancing Health Professions  
Association of Schools and Colleges of Optometry  
Association of Schools and Programs of Public Health  
Association of the Clinicians for the Underserved  
Association of University Programs in Health Administration  
Council on Social Work Education

Empowering Pacific Islander Communities  
Healthcare Leadership Council  
Latino Medical Student Association  
Medical Group Management Association  
MomsRising/MamásConPoder  
National Asian Pacific American Families Against Substance Abuse  
National Association of Hispanic Nurses  
National Association of Nurse Practitioners in Women's Health  
National Association of Pediatric Nurse Practitioners  
National Council for Diversity in the Health Professions  
National Council of Asian Pacific Americans  
National Hispanic Medical Association  
National Latina Institute for Reproductive Justice  
National League for Nursing  
National Nurse-Led Care Consortium  
National Organization of Nurse Practitioner Faculties  
North American Primary Care Research Group  
PA Education Association  
Pediatric Policy Council  
Planned Parenthood Federation of America  
Pre-Health Dreamers  
Social Mission Alliance  
Society for Cardiovascular Angiography and Interventions  
Society for Pediatric Research  
Society of General Internal Medicine  
Society of Teachers of Family Medicine  
South Asian Public Health Association  
Student National Medical Association  
The Catholic Health Association of the United States