



May 7, 2024

**Written Testimony of Antonio R. Flores
President and CEO
Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities
Support for Permanent Solution for Dreamers**

Dear Chairman Durbin and Ranking Member Graham:

On behalf of the Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities (HACU), I urge Congress to expedite the passage of The Dream Act as a permanent and reasonable solution to the uncertainty and challenges that Dreamers face with or without DACA. This Act is not only a necessary response to a pressing issue but also a critical investment in the future of our nation.

HACU represents 600 Hispanic-Serving Institutions (HSIs) and over 400 emerging HSIs, which collectively serve a sizable portion of the nation's undocumented students, including Dreamers DACA protection. Currently, over 400,000 undocumented students, including many Dreamers, are pursuing higher education, further highlighting their integral role in our communities¹. Recent studies indicate that 73.5% of DACA recipients are completing a bachelor's degree or higher academic credentials, conclusively demonstrating the crucial role that HSIs can play in supporting their educational journey².

A decade after DACA's launching, more than 830,000 individuals have been granted deferred action. However, many more remain in limbo due to legal uncertainties and the inability to apply for DACA amidst ongoing federal court proceedings. It is crucial to note that the vast majority of Dreamers arrived in the United States at a very young age and recognize the U.S. as their only home.

The contributions of DACA recipients to the U.S. economy and society are substantial and multifaceted. Our nation and local communities have come to rely on the economic contributions of DACA recipients who pay over \$6.2 billion in federal taxes and \$3.3 billion in state and local taxes each year. In addition, they have bought 68,000 homes, totaling \$760 million in mortgage payments and \$2.5 billion in rental payments each year³. Halting DACA renewals could cost the U.S. economy over \$280 billion in the next decade⁴. Research has estimated that a pathway to citizenship for Dreamers would generate \$800 billion in gross domestic product (GDP) growth over a decade.

¹ https://www.higheredimmigrationportal.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/08/07.23-Undocumented-Students_v3.pdf

² <https://www.americanprogress.org/article/2023-survey-of-daca-recipients-highlights-economic-advancement-continued-uncertainty-amid-legal-limbo/>

³ <https://www.americanprogress.org/article/the-demographic-and-economic-impacts-of-daca-recipients-fall-2021-edition/>

⁴ <https://www.cato.org/blog/economic-fiscal-impact-repealing-daca>

DACA recipients have become essential workers, homeowners, household heads, entrepreneurs, and business owners. They are making significant contributions to the American economy and local communities as doctors, nurses, teachers, engineers, members of our military, skilled workers, and taxpayers. For example, approximately 30,000 healthcare workers who cared for the sick, served our neediest communities, and alleviated the shortage of health professionals at the height of the COVID-19 pandemic were DACA recipients⁵.

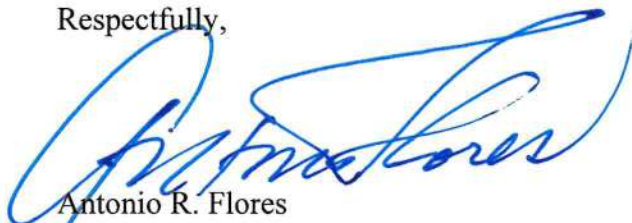
The urgency for a permanent legislative solution is underscored by the broad support among both Republicans and Democrats, and by the various sectors of the economy and society that benefit from the talents and contributions of Dreamers. Now is the time for a bipartisan compromise that ensures permanent protections for Dreamers, separate from the debates over border security and other immigration issues.

Congress must act now to prevent the devastating economic and societal impacts of failing to secure the future of Dreamers with and without DACA. The Dream Act would provide these young individuals with the stability and opportunities they need to fully realize their potential and continue contributing to our national prosperity. The passage of the Dream Act is the best solution to the untenable morass of keeping Dreamers as outsiders in the only country they call home.

We are committed to supporting our students and institutions, and we eagerly anticipate the opportunity to collaborate on achieving a permanent effective solution. HACU stands ready to serve as a resource as you deliberate on this crucial legislation.

Thank you for your consideration of this testimony.

Respectfully,



Antonio R. Flores
President and CEO
Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities

⁵ <https://www.americanprogress.org/article/demographic-profile-daca-recipients-frontlines-coronavirus-response/>