

September 14, 2017

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Majority Leader
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Paul Ryan
Speaker
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Chuck Schumer
Minority Leader
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Minority Leader
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Majority Leader McConnell, Speaker Ryan, Minority Leader Schumer, and Minority Leader Pelosi:

On behalf of the undersigned health professions organizations, we urge you to ensure that all members of the health care workforce with Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) status are able to continue their employment, education, training, and research, with passage of a permanent legislative remedy, such as the bipartisan, bicameral Dream Act of 2017 (S. 1615, H.R. 3440). By providing a legal pathway to permanent residency for undocumented Americans brought to the U.S. as children, Congress can help our country produce a diverse and culturally responsive health care workforce to meet the needs of underserved populations, improve cultural awareness, and promote health equity.

With the nation's population growing and becoming increasingly diverse, it is crucial that the health professions workforce respond to the changing demographics of the country to mitigate racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic health disparities. Research demonstrates that diversity in the health professions leads to improvements in access to care for underserved communities, and some studies have shown that patients report greater satisfaction with clinical care when they are treated by providers from the same racial/ethnic background.

Diverse health professions school classes also enhance the ability of the entire workforce to provide culturally competent care to individuals regardless of their background. Higher education research shows that diversity in the classroom produces a more enriched learning environment. Diversity contributes to increased exposure to divergent perspectives, enhances cognitive complexity, promotes civic engagement and facilitates more inclusive teaching and educational content. Diversity in teams has contributed to greater productivity, creativity and innovation that has significant implications for advancing science and health care.

Health professions students who are undocumented encompass a diverse, multiethnic population, who are often bilingual and more likely to practice in underserved communities. For a narrow cohort of undocumented students that meet specific criteria, legislation like the Dream Act of 2017 would grant lawful presence in the U.S., work authorization, and in many cases state identification and driver's licenses, all of which make attending health professions school and residency training possible.

Our organizations are dedicated to promoting a culturally competent, diverse, and prepared health and biomedical workforce that leads to improved care and health equity. A permanent legislative remedy would help us achieve this goal. We urge congressional leadership to advance legislation before health professionals participating in DACA lose their lawful status and are unable to continue their employment, education, training, and research.

Sincerely,

Academic Consortium for Integrative Medicine & Health
Academy on Violence and Abuse
Alliance for Academic Internal Medicine
American Academy of Dermatology Association
American Academy of Family Physicians
American Academy of Hospice and Palliative Medicine
American Academy of Pediatrics
American Association of Anatomists
American Association of Chairs of Departments of Psychiatry
American Association of Colleges of Nursing
American Association of Colleges of Pharmacy
American Association of Colleges of Podiatric Medicine
American Association of Directors of Psychiatric Residency Training
American Board of Medical Specialties
American College of Physicians
American Congress of Obstetricians and Gynecologists
American Dental Education Association
American Geriatrics Society
American Medical Association
American Medical Student Association
American Nurses Association
American Organization of Nurse Executives
American Physiological Society
American Psychiatric Association
American Psychological Association
American Society for Clinical Laboratory Science
American Society for Microbiology
American Society for Pharmacology & Experimental Therapeutics
American Society of Transplantation
Americas Hepato-Pancreato-Biliary Association
Asian Pacific American Medical Student Association
Association for Prevention Teaching and Research
Association of Academic Health Sciences Libraries

Association of American Medical Colleges
Association of American Veterinary Medical Colleges
Association of Anatomy Cell Biology and Neurobiology Chairs
Association of Departments of Family Medicine
Association of Family Medicine Residency Directors
Association of Graduate Departments of Biochemistry
Association of Nurses in AIDS Care
Association of Psychologists in Academic Health Centers
Association of Schools and Colleges of Optometry
Association of Schools and Programs of Public Health
Association of Schools of Allied Health Professions
Association of University Anesthesiologists
Association of University Professors of Neurology
Association of Women's Health, Obstetric and Neonatal Nurses
Council of Emergency Medicine Residency Directors
Council on Social Work Education
Emergency Medicine Residents' Association
GLMA: Health Professionals Advancing LGBT Equality
Heart Failure Society of America
HIV Medicine Association
Infectious Diseases Society of America
Latino Medical Student Association
Medical Group Management Association
National Association of Nurse Practitioners in Women's Health
National Council of Asian Pacific Islander Physicians
National Hispanic Medical Association
National League for Nursing
National Organization of Nurse Practitioner Faculties
North American Primary Care Research Group
Physician Assistant Education Association
Pre-Health Dreamers
Society of Academic Associations of Anesthesiology and Perioperative Medicine
Society of Emergency Medicine Physician Assistants
Society of General Internal Medicine
Society of Surgical Chairs
Society of Teachers of Family Medicine
Student National Medical Association