



September 29, 2017

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

On behalf of the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) and the state education leaders we represent, I urge you to pass legislation to protect participants in the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program. CCSSO is the nonpartisan, nationwide, nonprofit organization of public officials who head departments of elementary and secondary education in the states, the District of Columbia, the Department of Defense Education Activity, the Bureau of Indian Education, and five U.S. extra-State jurisdictions.

DACA participants have made great contributions to the American education system, society and economy. A recent survey of DACA participants found that 45% of respondents were currently in school, with 72% of those pursuing a bachelor's degree or higher.¹ According to the Migration Policy Institute, three-quarters of working-age DACA-eligible individuals were in the labor force in 2014, and one in four of these employed workers was also attending college while holding down a job.² Rescinding DACA without providing an alternative will greatly harm many of our nation's most promising young people, and the American economy and society as a whole.

As K-12 education leaders, state chiefs work every day to educate DACA-eligible students, as our calling as educators demands and the U.S. Constitution requires.³ As state leaders in education, we strive to ensure we are meeting the needs of every child. To do this, we must provide a safe and supportive school environment for every student who enters our doors. Many states already have made efforts to reach out and ensure these students feel safe and protected while at school. Yet we cannot fully accomplish this without a bipartisan solution to protect these kids now and in the future. Our critical work is undermined if these students are made ineligible for authorized participation in the workforce, are unable to access higher education and postsecondary training, or if these students fear attending a public school.

DACA participants entered this country as minors and have learned from American teachers in American schools. As five former U.S. Secretaries of Education from both political parties recently noted in a joint letter to Congress in support of legislation to protect DACA participants, "They are American in every way but their paperwork." State education leaders are pleased to join our former colleagues at the federal level in demanding that Congress "put politics aside and do what's right."

¹ See <https://cdn.americanprogress.org/content/uploads/2017/08/27164928/Wong-Et-Al-New-DACA-Survey-2017-Codebook.pdf>.

² "The Education and Work Profiles of the DACA Population," Randy Capps, Michael Fix, and Jie Zong, Migration Policy Institute, August 2017. Available at <http://www.migrationpolicy.org/research/education-and-work-profiles-daca-population>.

³ *Plyler v. Doe*, 457 U.S. 202 (1982) (holding that the Equal Protection Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment prohibits states from denying students a free public education on account of their immigration status).



We strongly urge Congress to approve a legislative solution that protects DACA participants and strengthens America.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "C. Minnich", is written in a cursive style.

Chris Minnich