

September 8, 2017

Dear Honored Members of the Arizona Congressional Delegation,

As the leaders of Arizona's public universities, we have spoken publicly and often of our support for our state's Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals students. Today, we write with a shared sense of urgency, and solidarity to urge your support of an immediate and practical solution for our DACA students.

President Trump's action this week to rescind the executive order that established the DACA program has created a catalytic moment for Congress to take up this cause and define sensible legislative solutions to shield our DACA students from deportation, thereby enabling their ability to contribute to a rich future in our country. We urge you to enact meaningful immigration reform that provides legal certainty for these students.

Deferred Action, once but a federal program moniker and deportation status, now sadly but aptly speaks to the circumstance of these students. Students who were kindergartners at the time DACA was established are now heading to middle school; high-school students are now heading to college. At our three public universities, approximately 300 students have lawful presence as a result of the DACA order. Although the number of DACA students on our campuses today is small, many young Arizonans will be impacted by the outcomes of the coming federal policy decisions that must be made and have too long been delayed.

The president's deadline has brought the practical implications for our students to the forefront - for us, for you and for our nation. The uncertainty of the DACA program itself has led to additional strife within our state's leadership, with potential legal challenges to the board's decisions and other good faith efforts that recognize DACA authorization for tuition residency classifications.

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Our board has long recognized that relief for these students regarding their lawful immigration status and legal presence can only be determined by Congress. Now that the matter has been returned to your jurisdiction, we encourage you as our trusted representatives to act swiftly and justly while being ever mindful of the humanity of these students, whose immigration circumstances are largely understood to not be of their own doing. For them, DACA is much more than a political or legal debate, it is utterly foundational to their chances for success in life.

The Arizona Board of Regents and our public universities are committed to making a university education more affordable while promoting success for all aspiring students, including DACA students. The DACA status is what has recently allowed these students to have access to lower tuition rates equivalent to in-state tuition. Without DACA or other meaningful solutions, these lower tuition rates in the future will certainly be in jeopardy, thereby jeopardizing any meaningful chance to continue their education

We know you are equally concerned about the plight of DACA students. As the uncertainty and anxiety for these students escalates, we want to assure you that we are committed to supporting their success.

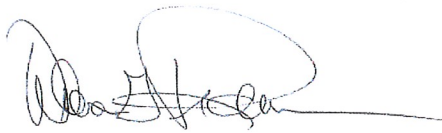
As with all of our students, we will work within the law to meet their needs and respect their rights.

The board of regents and the presidents of our universities stand ready to work with each of you in this regard. Immigration reform is critical to the success of Arizona's public universities and our state where jobs depend ever more on a qualified talent pool. Lawmaking enacted by Congress concerning DACA students, along with green card reforms for international graduates with advanced degrees who seek legal residence - to assist in producing a ready workforce in the science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) fields - and reforms to non-immigrant visas are sure ways to enhance our ability to attract and retain talented students and faculty.


Arizona is perhaps the epicenter of the immigration debate. With a growing economy that is enhanced and enriched by the diversity of its people, Arizona certainly stands at the frontier of American change and innovation. As congressional leaders whose strength is recognized throughout the world, our nation and the citizens of this state now look to you for your fortitude and tenacity to advance visionary policies that support these students.

We thank you for your leadership on higher education's interests in immigration reform efforts. Our ability to educate and develop a highly-skilled workforce for Arizona, as well as to attract and retain leading educators and researchers from around the world, is strengthened by balanced immigration laws that promote access to educational and economic opportunities. If you have any questions about the DACA student cohort in our state and our board policies, we are happy to discuss further at your convenience.

Sincerely,



William Ridenour  
Chair  
Arizona Board of Regents



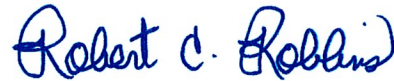
Eileen I. Klein  
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