



**Association of
American Medical Colleges**

655 K Street, N.W., Suite 100, Washington, D.C. 20001-2399
T 202 828 0460 F 202 862 6161
www.aamc.org

Darrell G. Kirch, M.D.
President and Chief Executive Officer

December 7, 2016

The Honorable Lindsey Graham
290 Russell Senate Office Building
1st and C Streets, N.E.
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Dick Durbin
Assistant Minority Leader
S-321, U.S. Capitol Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Jeff Flake
413 Russell Senate Office Building
1st and C Streets, N.E.
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senators:

On behalf of the Association of American Medical Colleges (AAMC), thank you for your leadership to ensure medical students and medical residents with Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) status are able to continue their medical education and training. Your efforts will help medical schools and teaching hospitals produce a diverse and culturally responsive health care workforce to meet the needs of underserved populations, improve cultural awareness, and promote health equity.

The AAMC serves and leads the academic medicine community to improve the health of all. It is a not-for-profit association dedicated to transforming health care through innovative medical education, cutting-edge patient care, and groundbreaking medical research. Its members comprise all 147 accredited U.S. and 17 accredited Canadian medical schools; nearly 400 major teaching hospitals and health systems, including 51 Department of Veterans Affairs medical centers; and more than 80 academic societies. Through these institutions and organizations, the AAMC serves the leaders of America's medical schools and teaching hospitals and their nearly 160,000 faculty members, 83,000 medical students, and 115,000 resident physicians.

The AAMC is dedicated to promoting a culturally competent, diverse, and prepared health and biomedical workforce that leads to improved health. With the nation's population growing and becoming increasingly diverse, it is crucial that the physician workforce reflect 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 the underserved, and learning environments that increase creativity and innovation for all students. Additionally, studies have shown that patients have more positive experiences when

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they are treated by physicians who look like them. Diverse medical school classes do more than increase the diversity of the physician workforce; they also enhance the ability of the entire workforce to provide culturally competent care for people regardless of their background.

The AAMC supports several public and private efforts that aid in diversifying the health care workforce to meet the health care needs of our country. Federal initiatives include the Title VII pipeline and workforce training programs at the Health Resources and Services Administration, such as the Health Careers Opportunity Program and the Centers of Excellence. The AAMC also supports a balanced physician immigration system (including the J-1 and H-1B visas) that prevents international “brain drain,” while improving health care access in our nation’s underserved communities through programs like the State Conrad 30 and the National Interest Waiver programs.

Students with DACA status encompass a diverse, multicultural, multiethnic population, who are often bilingual and more likely to practice medicine in underserved communities. DACA grants lawful presence in the United States, work authorization, Social Security numbers, and in many cases state IDs and driver’s licenses, all of which make attending medical school and residency training possible.

Though still a small percentage of medical students, the number of applicants and matriculants who identified having a DACA status continues to grow year after year. In 2016, 108 students with DACA status applied to medical school, and 34 matriculants with DACA status entered medical school, bringing total medical school enrollment to approximately 70 students. Moving forward, nearly half of U.S. medical schools report willingness to consider future applicants with DACA status who are still working toward their undergraduate degree.

In response to DACA, the AAMC expanded its Fee Assistance Program (FAP) for the Medical College Admission Test® (MCAT®) and the American Medical College Application Service® (AMCAS®) to students with DACA status. Additionally, the AAMC has worked with medical schools, teaching hospitals, and the Pre-Health Dreamers network to address potential barriers for DACA applicants, including several guides and webinars for admissions and program staff. Likewise, other health education organizations, including the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and the National Medical Fellowships, have recently updated their eligibility policy to be inclusive of students with DACA status.

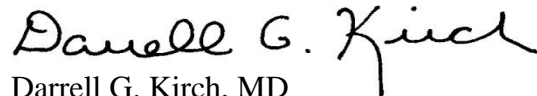
The AAMC applauds your leadership in crafting a potential legislative solution that would ensure a temporary stay of deportation for students with DACA status until such time that Congress approves a permanent fix. To that end, the AAMC supports the Development, Relief, and Education for Alien Minors (DREAM) Act. At its core, the DREAM Act would establish a path to legal immigration status for a narrow cohort of undocumented American children who came to this country due to the actions of their parents (“DREAMers”). It would also allow greater flexibility for states by repealing federal penalties for states that provide in-state tuition to undocumented students. Further, AAMC encourages Congress to grant DREAMers eligibility

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for federal student loans—financing medical education is often cited as the biggest barrier for aspiring physicians. The DREAM Act has been introduced in almost every Congress since 2001 and has received bipartisan support.

Medical students and residents with DACA status and DREAMers represent an important segment of the U.S. population, and their participation in our health care workforce will benefit all U.S. patients. As part of the next generation of physicians, they advance a diverse and culturally responsive health care workforce that meets the needs of underserved populations and promotes health equity. The AAMC looks forward to working with you and the broader higher education community to allow these dedicated students and residents to continue their medical education and training. For additional information, please do not hesitate to contact Matthew Shick (mshick@aamc.org), director, government relations and regulatory counsel.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Darrell G. Kirch". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Darrell G. Kirch, MD
President and Chief Executive Officer