

June 27, 2019

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Majority Leader
317 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Lindsey Graham
Chairman of the Senate Judiciary Committee
290 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Charles E. Schumer
Minority Leader
332 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Dianne Feinstein
Ranking Member of the Senate Judiciary Committee
331 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Majority Leader McConnell, Minority Leader Schumer, Chairman Graham, and Ranking Member Feinstein:

On behalf of the undersigned health professions organizations, we urge you pass legislation that would provide a pathway to citizenship for undocumented young people and those approved for Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA). We are pleased that the House of Representatives passed the American Dream and Promise Act of 2019 (H.R. 6) and that Senators Graham and Durbin have reintroduced the Dream Act of 2019 (S.874). We urge the Senate to pass either bill as soon as possible.

H.R. 6 and S. 874 would ensure that members of the health care workforce approved for DACA and other undocumented young people are able to continue their employment, education, training, and research in the health professions. By providing a legal pathway to citizenship for undocumented Americans who came 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 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.

Health professions students who are undocumented encompass a diverse, multiethnic population, who are often bilingual and more likely to practice in underserved communities. Legislation that grants lawful status in the U.S. to DACA recipients and other undocumented young people would enhance our workforce and create certainty to health professions schools and residency training programs. Moreover, these individuals often overcome significant barriers to complete health professions training, and we should not squander this investment in the U.S. health workforce nor stymie their ability to contribute to our economy and society.

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. As such, we strongly urge you to pass S. 874 or H.R. 6 as soon as possible.

Sincerely,

Alliance for Academic Internal Medicine
American Academy of Family Physicians
American Academy of Neurology
American Academy of Pediatrics
American Association of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry
American Association of Colleges of Nursing
American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists
American Dental Education Association
American Medical Association
Association for Prevention Teaching and Research
Association of American Medical Colleges
Association of American Veterinary Medical Colleges
Association of Nurses in AIDS Care
Association of Schools and Programs of Public Health
Association of Schools of Allied Health Professions
Association of University Anesthesiologists
Council of Residency Directors in Emergency Medicine
Council on Social Work Education
GLMA: Health Professionals Advancing LGBTQ Equality
National Association of Hispanic Nurses
National Association of Nurse Practitioners in Women's Health
National Association of Nurse Practitioners in Women's Health
National Hispanic Medical Association
National League for Nursing
National Organization of Nurse Practitioner Faculties
Pre-Health Dreamers
Society of General Internal Medicine
Student National Medical Association