

Letter from Arizona Public School District Superintendents

In response to the Potential Elimination of DACA (Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals)

Arizona is home to approximately 200 school districts – all very unique. We vary in size, grade levels served, and demographics. We vary in mission and vision. We even vary in initiatives and programs. Despite our differences, however, we all share the same values: love, commitment, respect, community, prosperity for all.

We believe in our students. We believe in their limitless potential. We believe in their hopes, dreams, and aspirations, and we are committed to doing all we can to make them a reality.

We also believe in taking a stand on behalf of our students and their families during times of great need. We believe that this is one of those times.

Many of our students, staff, parents, and community members are DACA recipients or are DACA eligible. The DACA program, designed to help undocumented youth living in the United States, has been extremely successful by all measures. According to the largest ever national study done on DACA (Wong 2017), 69% of DACA recipients have increased their annual salaries, 16% have purchased new homes, 90% have received their first driver's license, 65% have purchased their first car, and 5% have even started their own business. All of these measures have a direct impact on the success and health of our economy. Today in America, over 800,000 individuals are DACA recipients and are contributing billions of dollars to our economy. They are also filling much needed jobs in education, healthcare, technology, finance, and our military.

The elimination of DACA will not only have a dramatic economic impact to our respective counties, Arizona, and our country, it will also have a significant impact on our school communities. Many of our employees are DACA recipients – from teachers to technology specialists. We will have classrooms that need long-term substitutes, cafeterias that need cooks, sports teams that need coaches, and counseling centers that need counselors. With school systems that are already deprived of people and resources, this brings us great concern.

But to us, the undersigned public district superintendents, this is much more than an economic or educational issue. This is personal.

We will have students, already living in poverty, who will see their household annual income decline drastically, if not completely. We will have high school seniors, college within reach, who will have to alter their post-secondary plans. We have alumni attending community colleges and universities who will be forced to drop out. We have high school and college graduates, currently working full-time throughout the state, who will become unemployed. Many of these individuals are the breadwinners of their families or, even worse, the sole income. The social, emotional, and financial toll this will take on our communities is far greater than the general public is aware.

Today, although we serve different districts, we stand together as one community. We stand together with our students, staff, and families. We ask that you, in whatever role you play and with whatever influence you may have, stand with us in opposing the repeal of DACA.