



OP-ED

Let the DREAMers become the true Americans that they already are

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As lawmakers in Washington debate the future of the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program, the lives of up to 800,000 young people hang in the balance. While Congress and the White House go back and forth, the threat of deportation becomes more acute for “DREAMers” who have called this country home for most of their young lives. As the leaders of three anchor institutions in a community built by immigrants, we come together to call for a solution for them.

Each of us understands all too well the plight of these students. Julio Frenk’s family fled Germany to escape Nazi persecution. Mark Rosenberg is the child of a Holocaust survivor. At just 15 years old, Eduardo Padrón fled Cuba under Operation Pedro Pan. As immigrants and the children of refugees, we have faced many of the same challenges the DREAMers face now. But we were also taken in by a country that embraced its immigrant heritage and understood that education truly is the great equalizer. We are all products of U.S. higher education and now, we are leaders of significant institutions in a community profoundly rooted in the American dream.

But our stories are not unique. We represent thousands of students from around the world, many of them immigrants and many of them DACA recipients. Among the three of us, much has been said and written about the contributions DREAMers make in our community, how proud we are of our immigrant history and how our universities will always be open for anyone wishing to learn, no matter where they come from. We have joined coalitions, sat on panels and created numerous initiatives at our institutions to help the DREAMers in any way we can. Now, we lend our unified voices to the chorus of leaders in higher education, government and the private sector calling for a solution that will bring the DREAMers fully into American life and give them the right to learn, work and support their families.

For many, this is an issue of politics and partisanship, a piece in a larger political puzzle. For some, it’s an economic issue. We know that deporting 800,000 people who live, work and pay taxes in communities across our country would stifle the economy. We know that DREAMers stand to contribute more than \$460 billion to the national gross domestic product in the next decade, major economic growth that would disappear if they are forced to leave. We know that an overwhelming majority of people support letting them stay. We know the statistics. But as educators in one of the communities most affected by DACA’s termination, we also know first-hand the stories of these young people. We know that they are ambitious, bright and work twice as hard because they have so much more to prove. We have seen their exceptional courage and we have seen them organize their communities and fight to stay in the only place they know as home.

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DREAMers are our friends, family, neighbors and students. They are future nurses, first-responders and entrepreneurs. They plan to serve in our military and teach in our schools. They are, in all the ways that matter, Americans.

If the DREAMers were to lose their protections, they would lose their jobs, their ability to support their families and even their driver’s licenses. Simply put, they would lose the right to make a life for themselves.

We thank the bipartisan committee of determined legislators working around the clock to reach an agreement and find a solution to DACA. We come together now as immigrants, refugees and educators to say unequivocally to those who hold the fate of the DREAMers in their hands: Do what is right, adopt immigration laws that are consistent with our country’s values and give these young people a shot at the American dream. Just as we have come together to support the DREAMers, we call on you to put aside your political differences and give them back their future.

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