

May 1, 2020

The Honorable Michael Pence  
Vice President  
United States of America  
Old Executive Office Building  
Washington, DC 20501

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi  
Speaker  
United States House of Representatives  
H-232, United States Capitol  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Mitch McConnell  
Majority Leader  
United States Senate  
S-226, United States Capitol  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy  
Minority Leader  
United States House of Representatives  
H-204, United States Capitol  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Charles Schumer  
Minority Leader  
United States Senate  
S-255, United States Capitol  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Vice President Pence, Speaker Pelosi, House Minority Leader McCarthy, Senate Majority Leader McConnell, and Senate Minority Leader Schumer:

The undersigned health professions organizations urge you to take regulatory or legislative action to maintain work authorization for individuals currently in Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) status during the COVID-19 national emergency.

Nearly 30,000 DACA recipients work as health care professionals across the United States. Rescinding DACA and the corresponding work authorizations for these providers would reduce our nation's health care capacity at a time we can ill-afford to lose valuable personnel.

As we informed the Supreme Court in an October 2019 amicus brief signed by 33 health professional education organizations:

The risk of a pandemic ... continues to grow, since infectious diseases can spread around the globe in a matter of days due to increased urbanization and international travel. These conditions pose a threat to America's health security—its preparedness for and ability to withstand incidents with public-health consequences. To ensure health security, the country needs a robust health workforce. Rescinding DACA, however, would deprive the public of domestically educated, well-trained, and otherwise qualified health care professionals who have been provided education in reliance on their ability to continue to work in the United States as health care professionals. [citations omitted]

The COVID-19 pandemic also illuminates longstanding social, economic, and health inequities in the United States that DACA can help address. Health professionals with DACA status encompass a diverse, multiethnic population, who are often bilingual and more likely to practice in underserved communities.

Accordingly, we urge the Administration to expeditiously announce plans to retain the DACA program during the COVID-19 national emergency regardless of the Supreme Court's upcoming decision. Additionally, we urge Congress to include a more permanent fix in the fourth COVID-19 emergency supplemental, such as the bipartisan Dream Act of 2019 (S. 874) or the House-passed American Dream and Promise Act of 2019 (H.R. 6). These bills would ensure that undocumented young people are able to continue their employment, education, training, and research in the health professions.

Our organizations are dedicated to promoting a health and biomedical workforce that leads to improved care and health equity for all. To meet the current health care needs of patients across the country, immediate regulatory or legislative action to retain DACA during the COVID-19 national emergency is necessary. Thank you for your continued support of the nation's health workforce and your efforts to combat the COVID-19 outbreak.

Sincerely,