Dear Speaker Pelosi, Leader McCarthy, Leader Schumer, and Leader McConnell,

As leaders in early childhood, preK-12, and higher education, we urge you to provide a pathway to citizenship for Dreamers this year. Since 2001, immigrant youth have watched with cautious optimism as iteration after iteration of legislation such as the DREAM Act and H.R. 6, the American Dream and Promise Act, have stalled in Congress. The Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program has provided a crucial lifeline over the past 10 years, granting hundreds of thousands of undocumented youth temporary protection from deportation and the opportunity to work lawfully in every sector of our economy, including in our country’s PreK-12 schools and college campuses. However, DACA remains wholly insufficient and still faces the threat of imminent termination in the courts. In October, the Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals upheld a lower court’s ruling finding that the 2012 DACA memo was unlawful, once again leaving hundreds of thousands of DACA recipients with heightened uncertainty about their future.

Today, 20,000 DACA recipients serve as educators, filling critical roles at a time when U.S. schools are reporting increased teacher vacancies. Earlier this year, the National Center for Education Statistics found that 44% of public schools reported full- or part-time teaching vacancies, further straining our education ecosystem and amplifying the challenges resulting from the pandemic. According to the National Assessment of Educational Progress, the pandemic has wiped out two decades of progress in math and reading for U.S. schoolchildren. This context calls on us as a country to be bold in our leadership to get students back on track, and not to pull out the rug from under thousands of educators and hundreds of thousands of others contributing to communities across the country. At the same time that schools and other crucial industries are struggling to fill critical worker shortages, there are over 400,000 undocumented students enrolled in post-secondary institutions in the U.S. and an estimated 100,000 undocumented students graduating from U.S. high schools each year. The vast majority
of these undocumented students are ineligible for DACA. As such, these bright young people are shut out from contributing the totality of their talents to the U.S. workforce, including schools and colleges across the country. But Congress can change that. Only Congress can ensure that these immigrant youth who are aspiring educators, scientists, healthcare professionals, entrepreneurs, and more are able to serve in the country they call home.

As the future of 600,000 current DACA recipients and more than one million other Dreamers hangs in the balance, the time to act is now. We cannot continue delaying permanent protections for the DACA recipients and undocumented youth whose home is here. We urge Congress to prioritize passing legislation that provides permanent protections and a pathway to citizenship for Dreamers before the 117th Congress adjourns. Our students, our teachers, our schools, and our communities depend on it.

Sincerely,

AACTE (American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education)
AASA, The School Superintendents Association
Aliento Education Fund
All4Ed
American Federation of Teachers
American Psychological Association
American School Counselor Association
BreakFree Education
Breakthrough Central Texas
Center for American Progress
Center for Law and Social Policy
Chiefs for Change
Children's Defense Fund
Clearinghouse on Women's Issues
Council of Administrators of Special Education
EDGE Consulting Partners
Education Law Center-PA
Education Leaders of Color (EdLoC)
Education Reform Now
Educators for Excellence
EduColor
Feminist Majority Foundation