



Frank H. Wu
President

July 15, 2020

The Honorable Betsy DeVos
Secretary
U.S. Department of Education
400 Maryland Avenue, SW
Washington, D.C. 20202

Re: Docket ID ED-2020-OPE-0078, Comments in Response to Interim Final Rule on Eligibility of Students at Institutions of Higher Education for Funds Under the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act

I am submitting this correspondence in the notice-and-comment process regarding the Department of Education's interim final rule, Eligibility of Students at Institutions of Higher Education for Funds under the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act. At this challenging moment in our history, the CARES Act is much needed. It would be a shame for this legislation to prove divisive rather than unifying.

There are profound humanitarian and moral reasons to include DACA recipients in the grants under the CARES Act. There is also a compelling practical argument which, under the federal statute and well-established legal precedent, the Department of Education is required to consider. In study after study, empirical data overwhelmingly shows that immigrants, including those who are eligible for DACA, contribute more to society than they take. The premise that immigrants, documented or not, create a net economic loss for the nation is completely false. Quite the opposite: In the aggregate and on average, immigrants, even those who lack appropriate documentation, are a plus. Queens College professors have offered evidence for the facts presented here; their study is in the appendix. Under the most recent Supreme Court decision, DACA recipients have a continued right to remain in the United States (https://www.supremecourt.gov/opinions/19pdf/18-587_5ifl.pdf). The Department of Education should consider the direct and indirect economic effects of excluding them from CARES Act grants. Deprived of these grants, DACA students will be unable to access the higher education that prepares them to become productive members of society. However, given minimal aid, they will not only avoid unemployment and underemployment, but they will also play meaningful roles in rebuilding sectors devastated by the COVID-19 pandemic. This is especially true in



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Queens—the New York City borough that was hardest hit in the early phases of the health crisis and, not coincidentally, is populated by many newcomers, among them “Dreamers” in families of mixed status.

Individuals who are undocumented or otherwise out of status come from everywhere. Contrary to stereotypes, people of European and Asian heritage are heavily represented among DACA students, as are people of African and Caribbean descent; Chinese who were “paper sons” were among the original “illegal” immigrants a century ago. Some undocumented coming today have fled regimes recognized by the U.S. government as violating universal human rights. Many grew up here from early childhood and are unaware of any immigration issues from their past that might adversely affect their future. Whatever their background, DACA recipients do well. Studies by Queens College faculty confirm that they make good on the promise of higher education, developing the knowledge and skills that add to gross domestic product and increase local, state, and federal tax revenues. This diverse democracy was founded and has thrived as a land of immigrants. Recognizing that the criminalization of immigration status and stigma attached to individuals is a recent development, the city of New York prohibits the use of the term “illegal” (<https://legistar.council.nyc.gov/LegislationDetail.aspx?ID=4285027&GUID=556CC296-0A25-4168-A7C0-96B8EAC6E6BF&Options=ID|Text|&Search=illegal>). Extending CARES Act coverage to DACA recipients puts shared national ideals into practice.

As an institution that has educated immigrants and the children of immigrants since it was founded in 1937, Queens College values the Dreamers. They embody our mission and reflect the borough we serve so proudly. Our students trace their ancestry to nearly 140 countries and at home speak 83 languages. About a third of our undergraduates are foreign born, lending their perspectives to a campus that cherishes inquiry and independent thought. For role models, our students look to the college’s highly accomplished alumni, credited in a recent study with contributing \$1.5 billion to the regional economy and holding leadership roles in every field. Indeed, among our prominent graduates are two who arrived in this country without documentation and dedicated themselves to improving the lives of others: U.S. Representative Adriano Espaillat, who represents New York’s Thirteenth Congressional District, and immigration reform activist Cristina Jimenez Moreta, winner of a MacArthur Foundation Award, the so-called “genius grant.”

The Chancellor of The City University of New York, Dr. Felix Matos Rodriguez, recently published an op-ed with the title “An attack on DACA is an attack on CUNY”

(<https://www.nydailynews.com/opinion/ny-oped-an-attack-on-daca-is-an-attack-on-cuny->



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20200615-3esxui2gy5erlljylvspheemy-story.html). It is in that same spirit that this letter is submitted. Thank you for your consideration.

Frank H. Wu
President, Queens College

Appendices

Ortega, F., Edwards, R., Hsin, A., 2019. The Economic Effects of Providing Legal Status to DREAMers. IZA Journal of Labor Policy, 9:2.

<http://qcpages.qc.cuny.edu/~fortega/research/dreamers.pdf>

Op-ed derived from that research:

“How the DREAM Act can actually lower the deficit,” The Hill

Francesc Ortega and Amy Hsin

<https://thehill.com/opinion/immigration/373824-how-the-dream-act-can-actually-lower-the-deficit>

QC Economic Impact Statement, Executive Summary

https://www.qc.cuny.edu/about/MajorReports/Documents/Impact%20Analysis%20Report/QC_1718_ExecSum_Formatted_Final.pdf