



American Federation
of Teachers, AFL-CIO

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Department of Homeland Security
U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS)
Office of Policy and Strategy
Chief, Regulatory Coordination Division
20 Massachusetts Ave. N.W.
Washington, DC 20529-2140

e-Docket ID number USCIS-2012-0012

On behalf of the 1.5 million members of the American Federation of Teachers (AFT), I write today in support of efforts to renew the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program, and to suggest one change that will increase the positive impact of the program.

AFT members work with immigrant students every day in classrooms across the country, and we are committed to helping all students achieve their full potential, regardless of their immigration status or place of birth. We also believe that we cannot achieve long-term economic growth and increase our national competitiveness without ensuring that all children have a fair shot at realizing their dreams.

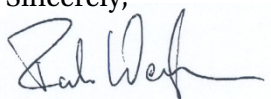
Every year, 65,000 undocumented students graduate from high school and only 5 to 10 percent of them go on to college. DACA, initiated in July 2012, not only halted the deportations of hardworking, law-abiding immigrant youth, but it also gave them work permits and, in some cases, the opportunity to obtain driver's licenses. In doing so, DACA has given renewed hope to thousands of DREAMers to pursue their dreams. The nearly 1 million youths eligible for the program have done everything our society has asked them to do. They have worked hard, studied hard, and are pursuing or have attained college educations. These young immigrants are our students, and they deserve a chance to become productive members of our society without living with constant fear and uncertainty.

For these reasons, we applaud DACA and celebrate the more than 600,000 students that have obtained temporary relief. Yet we realize that, as currently implemented, DACA excludes several thousand students who have similarly worked hard and studied hard, and are contributing to our society, but who exceed the upper age limit (of being under the age of 31 as of June 15, 2012). Like DACA-eligible youth, such immigrants consider the United States their home and want to be full members of our society. Maintaining barriers to their success does nothing to benefit our economy, our national security or our collective well-being.

As a nation of immigrants, we are keenly aware that our strength has always been built on the simple notion that America is a place where many become one. The AFT, as the representative of those who teach and care for our next generation, therefore strongly supports the renewal of DACA and asks that the program be strengthened by streamlining the renewal process for DACA beneficiaries and eliminating the upper age cap for eligibility.

Thank you for your work in implementing DACA, and for considering our views on this matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Randi Weingarten", is written over a light blue rectangular background.

Randi Weingarten
President

RW:ct opeiu#2 afl-cio