

September 25, 2017

Dear Senators Mike Enzi and John Barrasso and Congressman Cheney:

On behalf of the eight institutions of higher education in Wyoming, we are pleased to submit this joint letter sharing our perspective on the recent actions of President Trump to remove protections from the children of undocumented immigrants.

The number of undocumented immigrant children brought to the United States by their parents is relatively small in Wyoming—at least in comparison to states like California and Texas. But the value these young people bring to our state today, and into the future, is large.

Immigration is a complex topic, and while Congress should address that issue with measure, we urge you to act with urgency on a single, focused issue to ensure youth currently protected from deportation under the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program can continue their studies or employment in the United States.

Wyoming's rapidly aging population, the urgent need to diversify the economy, our reliance on a skilled workforce, and the growing minority population are all facets of the same complex discussion about Wyoming's future.

- Wyoming's population is aging quickly. In June 2017, Dr. Wenlin Lieu, Chief Economist, Wyoming's Economic Analysis Division, reported "The aging of Wyoming's population has picked up speed, and the pace was one of the fastest in the country."
- Wyoming's unemployment rate decreased from 5.0 to 3.8 percent from July 2016 to July 2017, largely because the state lost workers who tended to be the younger workforce.
- The growing minority population helped offset the labor force who moved out of the state. Dr. Lieu reported that "Nearly two-thirds of the state's population growth from 2010 to 2016 was attributed to addition in the minority population."
- While most of the minority population does not participate in DACA protections, the expiration of these protections would significantly impact Wyoming's minority population.
- Many of the youth and young adults protected under DACA are enrolled in one of Wyoming's seven community colleges or the University of Wyoming.

- Many of those with DACA protection have already graduated from one of Wyoming's colleges and are currently employed in Wyoming.
- Allowing the DACA protections to expire prior to enacting appropriate legislative measures will impact young adults currently enrolled in our colleges and currently working for Wyoming employers.

The young adults enrolled in our colleges who are in jeopardy of being deported are Wyoming's youth. Their hopes and dreams include futures in Wyoming. We know them and we know their stories. Yet, most of them do not know another home other than Wyoming, and sending them back to a country they cannot recall is not the answer. We advocate for them and for Wyoming's future, both of which will be better with them here.

We encourage you, Wyoming's Congressional Delegation, to support the Dream Act (S. 1615, H.R. 3440) or similar legislation that protects these youth from having to leave the only home they know. We ask that action be both compassionate and expeditious. Time is of the essence for these youth and for Wyoming's economy.

Thank you for your leadership in Washington, D.C., and for your representation of Wyoming. If we can provide additional information or be of further assistance on this topic, please do not hesitate to contact any of us.

Sincerely,

Dr. Joe Schaffer, President  
Laramie County Community College

Dr. Laurie Nichols, President  
University of Wyoming

Dr. Paul Young, President  
Northern Wyoming Community College District

Dr. Karla Leach, President  
Western Wyoming Community College

Dr. Lesley Travers, President  
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Dr. Stefani Hicswa, President  
Northwest College

Dr. Brad Tyndall, President  
Central Wyoming College

Dr. Darren Divine, President  
Casper College

c: Dr. Jim Rose, Executive Director, Wyoming Community College Commission  
Mrs. Erin Taylor, Executive Director, Wyoming Association of Community College Trustees