

June 20, 2013

United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator:

On behalf of the American Council on Education and the undersigned higher education associations representing approximately 4,300 two- and four-year, public and private non-profit colleges and universities, I am writing in opposition to Amendment # 1219, offered by Senator Joe Manchin to the DREAM Act provisions in the Border Security, Economic Opportunity, and Immigration Modernization Act of 2013 (S. 744).

The higher education community has supported the DREAM Act since it was first introduced in 2001. Approximately 65,000 undocumented students graduate from high school in the United States every year. These students are first-generation immigrants who were largely raised in this country and consider themselves Americans. We strongly support legislative efforts to remove federal and state barriers to higher education as a matter of fairness to these students, who are in an untenable situation through no fault of their own. An expedited path to citizenship should be the reward for accomplishing academic pursuits and/or serving in the U.S. military. In addition, the DREAM Act is important for our long-term economic growth, as it will provide a mechanism for these young people to come out of the shadows, pursue higher education and/or military service, and ultimately to work legally in this country. This will add thousands of talented, motivated and multilingual people to our workforce.

As reported by the Senate Judiciary Committee, S. 744 incorporates a version of the DREAM Act that we strongly support. It removes the age cap for eligibility, repeals the current federal law that prohibits states' options to provide in-state tuition to undocumented students and permits these students to receive federal student loans and work-study.

We believe that Amendment # 1219 would make it more difficult for many DREAM Act students to complete four-year degrees by eliminating the option for students in bachelor's degree programs to attain lawful permanent residency after completing two years toward their degree. We understand that Senator Manchin seeks to incentivize DREAM Act students to complete a college degree. However, we believe the DREAM Act provisions in S. 744 already contain such an incentive for students enrolled in bachelor's degree programs by providing them legal permanent residency (LPR) after they complete two years of studies, provided they also have met certain other requirements. Achieving LPR status makes these students eligible for federal student grant aid and, in many cases, state

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grant programs, thus providing them with invaluable financial assistance that many need to complete their studies.

While we recognize that Senator Manchin is offering this amendment in good faith, we believe his concern that the two-year option may provide an avenue for some students to take advantage of the system is unwarranted. The DREAM Act language and the intent behind it clearly require a student to complete two full years toward a bachelor's degree in order to obtain LPR. In most cases, two years of a bachelor's degree is neither less expensive nor easier than an associate's degree.

Unfortunately, Amendment # 1219 would undermine the primary purpose of the DREAM Act. Its main effect would be to prolong the path to permanent residency and citizenship for DREAM Act students who opt to pursue a bachelor's degree rather than increase the number of these students who achieve such degrees.

For these reasons, we respectfully request that you vote against Amendment # 1219 should it be presented for a vote during debate of S. 744 on the Senate floor.

Sincerely,



Terry W. Hartle
Senior Vice President

TWH/lw

On behalf of:

American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers
American Association of Community Colleges
American Association of State Colleges and Universities
American Council on Education
American Indian Higher Education Consortium
Association of American Universities
Association of Community College Trustees
Association of Jesuit Colleges and Universities
Association of Public and Land-grant Universities
College and University Professional Association for Human Resources
Council for Christian Colleges and Universities
Council for Opportunity in Education
Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities
National Association for Equal Opportunity in Higher Education
National Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators