



AMERICAN ASSOCIATION OF COMMUNITY COLLEGES
ASSOCIATION OF COMMUNITY COLLEGE TRUSTEES



May 8, 2013

The Honorable Patrick J. Leahy
Chairman
Committee on the Judiciary
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Charles E. Grassley
Ranking Member
Committee on the Judiciary
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Leahy and Ranking Member Grassley:

On behalf of America's community college leadership, the American Association of Community Colleges (AACC) and the Association of Community College Trustees (ACCT) write in regards to the Border Security, Economic Opportunity, and Immigration Modernization Act of 2013. We applaud your efforts in moving forward with a comprehensive immigration reform package, and in particular the bill's support for undocumented students wishing to pursue higher education. This is an important measure with many positive aspects.

Community colleges have long supported the enactment of the Development, Relief, and Education for Alien Minors (DREAM) Act. Approximately 65,000 undocumented students graduate high school each year, many of whom wish to go on to pursue higher education. These DREAM students were brought here as children, and have already spent years in the U.S. educational system demonstrating their ability to succeed academically.

Many of these DREAM students wish to enroll in community colleges or other higher education institutions, yet face significant federal and state barriers due to their undocumented status. We believe this reform package would address a number of obstacles faced by those students. We also strongly support the bill's reversal on the ban preventing states from offering in-state tuition to DREAM students. However, we are concerned that the bill fails to include an option that allows DREAM students to obtain a federal student loan or participate in the federal work study program. This had been included in previous iterations of the DREAM Act, and its exclusion will prevent some students from accessing higher education. The federal Direct Loan program offers students access to a stable interest rate with greater repayment protection than those offered by private lenders. Also, given that the federal government benefits financially from the Direct Loan program, the inclusion of DREAM students would be a cost beneficial decision.

We thank you for your work on this important piece of legislation, and hope that you will consider our recommendations as you move forward with this bill.

Sincerely,

Walter G. Bumphus
AACC President and CEO

J. Noah Brown
ACCT President and CEO