December 7, 2017

The Honorable Paul Ryan
Speaker
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Majority Leader
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Minority Leader
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Charles Schumer
Minority Leader
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Speaker Ryan and Leaders McConnell, Pelosi, and Schumer:

We are writing on behalf of the National Institute for Latino School Leaders (NILSL), an UnidosUS program. NILSL is a fellowship designed to bridge the gap between educators and policy makers. We are school leaders and advocates serving as leading voices in our schools, districts, and states for Latino students and English Learners. We write on behalf of educators, our students and their parents, and communities across America urging Congress to find a permanent legislative solution to protect DREAMers, and do so by the end of the year. Support for a permanent solution for these youth is an issue that enjoys wide bipartisan support and is supported by the vast majority of the American people.

As educators, we are firsthand witnesses to the value and success of DREAMers throughout our schools and our communities. They are in our classrooms, as both teachers and students, and they contribute to the education of each and every child. We also witness the negative impact that the current uncertainty and political climate have on our educators, our students, and their families. Our kids deserve better. They deserve certainty about their future, they deserve to know they will have access to higher education and other career pathways, and they deserve to learn in a safe and welcoming environment. As elected representatives in a country that prides itself on providing educational opportunities to every child, regardless of their status, it is your responsibility to pass legislation that helps our students realize their full potential.

We call on Congress to pass legislation that allows youth to continue pursuing their educational dreams. The uncertainty in Washington D.C. is having ripple effects throughout classrooms in our communities. Today, we have high school juniors and seniors who are unsure about their ability to pursue higher education. We fear that delays will cause them to miss key deadlines and opportunities to apply for college, scholarships, and make other important life decisions in preparation.

There are nearly 800,000 young people whose lives are in legal limbo. Never in our country’s history has our government taken hundreds of thousands of individuals lawfully present in the United States, that have passed criminal background checks, are contributing billions to our economy, and are valued members of our communities, and willfully added them to the number of undocumented people.
What makes this possibility even more heartless is the fact that, as we all know, America is the only country most DACA recipients have ever known. Failing to act by the end of this year on a permanent legislative solution is bringing them dangerously close to this unprecedented reality.

We are very encouraged that many members of Congress from both sides of the aisle are dedicated to finding a permanent solution for the DREAMers. This decision can’t wait – we urge you to vote on a permanent legislative solution for these young people by the end of this year to protect the hopes and dreams of our students and educators, who are American in every way except on paper. Thank you for your hard work on this issue.

Sincerely,

Jaime Huerta, Charter School Superintendent – Austin, TX
Yvette King-Berg, Executive Director- Los Angeles, CA
Ruby Lee, President of CLUES - St. Paul, MN
Irene Leon, Principal - New York, NY
Ruth Lopez, Senior Associate – Hanford, CA
Mayra Lopez-Zuniga, Chief of Staff - Office of IL State Rep. Theresa Mah – Chicago, IL
Ana Martinez, Executive Director - Fort Worth, TX
Jennifer Mayer-Glenn, Director Family-School Collaboration - Salt Lake City, UT
Chris McBride, Superintendent – Reno, NV
Heather McManus, Chief Learning Officer - Los Angeles, CA
Eduardo Mendez, Principal - Kansas City, KS
Ryan Monroe, Educator-Brentwood, MD
John Monteleone, Assistant Superintendent, Oberlin City Schools- Oberlin, OH
Kevin Myers, Principal - Los Angeles, CA
Jamie Nicholas, Assistant Principal – Denver, CO
Alexandra Oliver-Davila, Executive Director – Roslindale, MA
Dr. Ana F. Ponce, Chief Executive Officer of Camino Nuevo Charter Academy - Los Angeles, CA
Gini Pupo-Walker, Senior Director of Education Policy & Programs – Nashville, TN
Tommy Ramirez, Community Charter School Director - Chula Vista, CA
Marisol Rerucha, County Office Administrator - San Diego, CA
Jesus Sanchez, Education Director – Cleveland, OH
Ingrid Twyman, Alumni Teach Project Manager - Los Angeles, CA
Jose Varela, Associate Principal - Whittier, CA
Felipe Vieyra, Bilingual Community Organizer – Denver, CO