

DACA Teachers (HB1594)

DACA Nurses (Act 837) enabled more nurses to join the frontlines in the fight against COVID-19.

Now we have an opportunity to do the same to support our schools that are facing teachers shortages by ensuring that DACA Recipients are eligible for professional licensure to become teachers in Arkansas!

ISSUES

- As of June 2020, The Migration Policy Institute (MPI) reported that in Arkansas 8,000 met the criteria to apply for deferred action, and there have only been 4,480 DACA recipients. Professional licensure limitations contribute heavily to this low 56% participation rate.
- A 2018 Arkansas Department of Education report reveals the total number of students enrolled in teacher preparation programs (both traditional and alternative routes) declined from 6,621 in 2013 to 3,563 in 2018-- a decline of 42% fewer teacher candidates in the Arkansas teacher pipeline.
- Arkansas teacher shortages are in large part due to teachers leaving the state or changing careers. (Arkansas Education Report, 2018, 16(1), Office for Education Policy)
- As of the 2019-2020 school year, Hispanics make up just 1.39% of the teacher workforce, whereas Hispanic students make up 13.65% of the student population. (ADE Data Center)
- A growing body of comparative and quantitative work that examines preservice and early teacher multicultural beliefs finds that Latino and Black teachers are more multiculturally aware than their White peers and that higher levels of multicultural awareness are linked to better classroom environments (in classroom observations) (Cherng & Davis, 2015)

IMPACT

- Providing DACA teachers with professional licensure would ensure that there are more faculty at K-12 schools, where shortages were already present before the pandemic, and have been exacerbated by COVID-19.
- With DACA teachers, many emerging bilingual students and their parents would have representation and the ability to communicate with teachers.
- According to the National Center for Education Statistics, it costs an estimated \$13,847 to educate a public school student in 2017-2018. Granting professional licenses to immigrants who have benefited from public education in the U.S. allows them to join the workforce and contribute to the state's economy, thus allowing the state to get a return on its investment.

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TESTIMONIES:

Maria Colorado is an advocate for Arkansas's DACA teachers. In this legislative session, she hopes to reach legislative ears to bring awareness to matters that affect the Hispanic communities around the state and create change that supports our communities. One of those matters is the state's decision on DACA teachers. Like many professions that require certification, DACA student teachers cannot be certified upon graduation. DACA student teachers go through the same training, take the same Praxis exams and tests as any other School of Education graduate. She graduated from the University of Arkansas- Fort Smith in May 2020. She knew she wanted to be a teacher even after finding out she would not be able to teach right after graduation. She is currently working as an instructional assistant, and already absolutely loves the school environment. She believes in the DACA teachers bill and garnering more representation in the teacher workforce for students that look like her. She hopes that our legislators will join her in this fight for diversity and our teacher workforce.

MARIA COLORADO

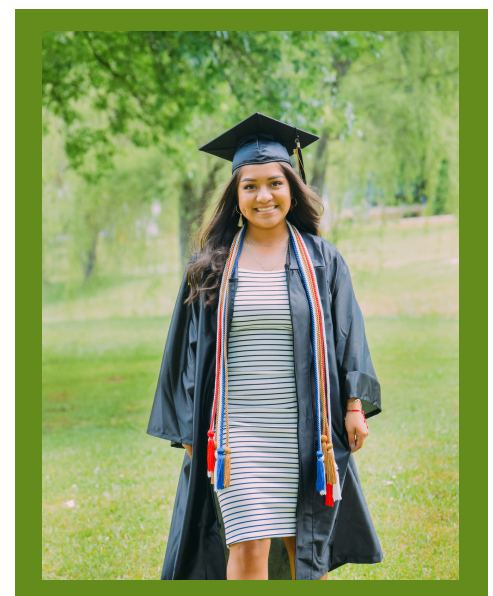


For more information about these legislative opportunities or to be connected to legislators who have already expressed interest contact:

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Hello, my name is Cindy, and I am a first-time DACA applicant. Today, I wanted to share my story and by doing so, I hope it will raise more awareness of this issue. I was born in Guerrero, Mexico, but at the age of eleven months, I was brought to the United States. We moved to Arkansas after arriving, so it is one of the few places I have come to recognize as "home." One of my life-long dreams is to become a teacher. Teachers play a vital role in the life of their students, and I would love to fulfill that role in a child's life. Teachers can have such a positive impact on their students' lives, and that impact may last a lifetime. I also believe that my purpose in life was to help others, and by going into the education field, I will be fulfilling that purpose. At one point in my life, I thought that college would no longer be a possibility for me because of my status. I lost my motivation to do good in school and it was hard to even think about my future. However, I was able to surpass that and with the help of my parents, I was able to pick myself up and regain the motivation that I had lost. In 2019, I graduated with honors from DeQueen High school, and I was blessed with a full-ride scholarship from TheDream.US to attend Christian Brothers University in Tennessee. Currently, I am a sophomore majoring in Early Childhood Education. Even though I am studying Tennessee, I hope to one day be able to teach in Arkansas. If the DACA teachers bill passes, I, along with many other DACA recipients, will have the opportunity to teach in Arkansas. Not only that, but DACA teachers will be able to represent their communities in the education field. I am immensely grateful for all the opportunities DACA offers and I am excited to finally start this new chapter in my life. I am also immensely grateful for the life my hard-working parents have given me in Arkansas. As a community, we need to be united and support this campaign because it is beneficial to us and to future generations. I am hopeful to see a new change in Arkansas. Arkansas United will keep fighting for this, and we will provide updates on this issue. Thank you for reading this, please take care and stay safe! Bendiciones!

CINDY RUEDA



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Other Legislative Opportunities related to Immigrants and Education:

- Extend opportunity to teaching licenses to Compact migrants (HB1387, Rep. Penzo) and other visa holders
- Amend all professional licensures to include Compact migrants (HB1378, Rep. Penzo) and other visa holders like DACA
- Amend the English-only law to permit dual immersion programs in K-12 public schools, building off the success of the Seal of Biliteracy (Rep. Godfrey)
- Create special state scholarship funding to incentivize racial minority teachers and linguistically diverse teachers
- Improve teaching licensure exams (Praxis) to support and incentivize racial minority and linguistically diverse teachers.
- Improve reciprocity process for teachers licensed in foreign countries, especially cost prohibitive fees related to the translation of transcripts and additional coursework. In the past, the DESE required foreign teachers to enter an alternative teaching pathway, which was costly and time-intensive.

DACA staff interested in becoming teachers often work as instructional assistants or paraprofessionals in the schools. Their assets of being culturally and linguistically diverse and having insider's knowledge of the families they serve becomes the life-line between teachers, parents, administrators, counselors and the community as they interpret, translate, provide academic and psychosocial (socio-emotional) support. They are an untapped resource for increasing teacher diversity, reducing teacher shortages in high need regions and in content areas (e.g., Special Education, ESL, Spanish, Mathematics, Chemistry, Physics, etc.) in Arkansas.

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