



MAURA HEALEY
ATTORNEY GENERAL

THE COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS
OFFICE OF THE ATTORNEY GENERAL
ONE ASHBURTON PLACE
BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS 02108

(617) 727-2200
(617) 727-4765 TTY
www.mass.gov/ago

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The Honorable Anne M. Gobi
Senate Chair, Joint Committee on Higher Education
State House, Room 413-A
Boston, MA 02133

The Honorable David M. Rogers
House Chair, Joint Committee on Higher Education
State House, Room 544
Boston, MA 02133

Re: Access to public colleges and universities legislation

Dear Chairwoman Gobi and Chairman Rogers:

Following up on the Joint Committee on Higher Education's recent hearing on bills relating to student aid, I write to express support for expanding access to our public colleges and universities by making all Massachusetts high school graduates who attended our high schools for at least three years eligible for in-state tuition rates, fees, and state-funded financial aid. Meaningful and equitable access to higher education is critically important to opening doors to success for all our students, including many immigrant students who have lived in our communities and attended our schools since childhood.

Legislative action to ensure opportunities for our young immigrant students is especially important at a time when federal immigration reform and programs like Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) still face an uncertain future. The Biden Administration is working to fortify and protect DACA, which has provided work authorization and protection against deportation for hundreds of thousands of young immigrants who were brought to the United States as children. But, a case that challenges the program's legality is still pending in federal court, leaving current and future recipients vulnerable. For thousands of these young people, often known as Dreamers, Massachusetts is the only home they have ever known. They attend school and play sports with our children, and they make significant contributions to our communities and our state.

Because of DACA, Dreamers in Massachusetts have had access to in-state tuition at our public colleges and universities, allowing them to reach for their educational and career goals.

Unfortunately, the Trump Administration attempted to terminate the DACA program and was successful in halting new applications for several years. Thanks to a court order and the Biden Administration, eligible students are now able to apply for DACA protections.

However, the COVID-19 pandemic and other factors have caused significant delays, contributing to the uncertainty felt by DACA recipients and applicants, as they await the outcome of a federal court case that threatens the DACA program and needed congressional action to provide security and a pathway to citizenship. Without state legislative action, these students could be excluded from in-state tuition and other state-funded higher education aid.

Inclusivity in the Massachusetts public higher education system is essential not only to ensuring fairness for our immigrant students but also to the state's economic, civic, and social health. Educational and workforce development programs offered by our public colleges and universities allow students to embark on enduring careers, support their families and communities, and contribute to our economy and civic discourse. These programs help keep Massachusetts first in the nation on many education and economic measures, and we cannot tolerate inequities that create opportunity gaps for immigrant students. Instead, our state should empower noncitizen youth attending our public colleges to flourish and realize their full potential. Given that one in five workers in Massachusetts is foreign-born—one in three in Boston—an educated future workforce depends on ensuring that all our students are able to pursue their higher education goals.

I therefore urge the Committee to favorably report legislation that would make all those who have graduated from a Massachusetts high school, or its equivalent, and attended high school in the state for at least three years, eligible for in-state tuition rates, fees, and for state financial aid, at public colleges and universities, regardless of the student's immigration status.

Thank you for your careful consideration of this important issue and for your hard work to ensure access and equity in higher education. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact Alicia Rebello-Pradas, Chief of our Policy and Government Relations Division, at (617) 963-2057.

Very truly yours,



Maura Healey