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# Dream and the Health Professions

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**ON SEPT. 5, 2017, THE TRUMP ADMINISTRATION** announced that it is ending the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program and that Oct. 5, 2017, would be the last day that U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services would accept any DACA applications. As a result, nearly 800,000 people no longer can renew their DACA and employment authorization. The DACA and work authorization they currently have remain valid only until the expiration date on their employment authorization document.

The effects of losing DACA and work authorization are profound. In response to a recent survey, 45 percent of respondents said that they are currently in school, and 94 percent of those in school said that, because of DACA, “I pursued educational opportunities that I previously could not.”<sup>1</sup> **One population particularly affected are aspiring and current health professionals** who have DACA. These people have undergone a long journey to access education and other training with the goal of becoming doctors, nurses, pharmacists, and physicians’ assistants. These pioneers are creating opportunities and resources that pave the way for others to follow. **DACA granted them the work permit and lawful presence necessary to access educational opportunities and seek employment.**

Specifically, medical students with DACA can use their work permit and lawful presence to complete their training by **entering a residency program, obtaining a medical license, and seeking employment.** In 2013, a year after DACA was implemented, Loyola University Chicago Stritch School of Medicine, along with a few other medical schools, began accepting students with DACA. Currently, **more than 50 MD-granting medical schools in the U.S. consider applicants with DACA.**<sup>2</sup> There are nearly 100 medical students with DACA, who will be applying to a U.S. residency program to complete their training. The number of DACA-recipient medical school enrollments have grown each year since DACA was first implemented. **Pre-Health Dreamers, an organization that supports undocumented students pursuing health science careers,** assists students who hope to go to medical

school or train for other health-related professional programs.

**The Dream Act of 2017 would help ensure that these students can continue in their career trajectories** instead of having to drop out of school when they lose their DACA and work authorization. It would also support aspiring health professional students to enter the medical field instead of deterring them from achieving their dreams. **The Dream Act would do the following for those who meet its eligibility criteria:**

- **Grant work authorization.** With a work permit, aspiring health professionals would be able to find employment and save money to make health professional training and medical school more accessible. Under Dream, medical students and physicians would be able to use their work authorization to become employed in hospitals, clinics, and community health centers. In addition, medical student trainees would be eligible to rotate through facilities administered by the Dept. of Veterans Affairs.
- **Improve access to a driver’s licenses in most states,** allowing students to drive legally to training and work sites, where they learn the practice of medicine from seasoned physicians.
- **Facilitate getting permission to travel abroad** and to participate in international humanitarian work, making programs like Doctors Without Borders accessible.
- **Allow U.S.-trained/educated health professionals to remain in the U.S.**
- **Allow Americans to receive quality health care** from highly competent and, in many cases, multilingual and multicultural U.S.-trained health professionals.

The Dream Act would help nearly 100 individuals in medical school and thousands more who aspire to enter the health professions to achieve their academic and professional goals.

For more information, visit the Pre-Health Dreamers website at [www.phdreamers.org](http://www.phdreamers.org).

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<sup>1</sup> *New Study of DACA Beneficiaries Shows Positive Economic and Educational Outcomes* (Center for American Progress, Oct. 18, 2016), [www.americanprogress.org/issues/immigration/news/2016/10/18/146290/new-study-of-daca-beneficiaries-shows-](http://www.americanprogress.org/issues/immigration/news/2016/10/18/146290/new-study-of-daca-beneficiaries-shows-)

[positive-economic-and-educational-outcomes/](http://www.phdreamers.org/positive-economic-and-educational-outcomes/).

<sup>2</sup> *Medical School Policies on Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA): 2017-2018* (Association of American Medical Colleges), <http://bit.ly/2mSQtPT>.