

DAILY BULLETIN

Ontario-Montclair superintendent urges Congress to protect undocumented students

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James Q. Hammond, superintendent of the Ontario-Montclair School District, is one of 55 K-12 superintendents and charter school chief executives who have signed a letter urging Congress to protect students with Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals, or DACA, status.

The [Oct. 24 letter](#) was sent by Los Angeles-based [Broad Center](#) to Speaker of the House Paul Ryan, House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi, Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell and Senate Minority Leader Charles Schumer.

“Every year, about 65,000 undocumented young people graduate from our nation’s high schools, according to the American Immigration Council. We know many of them, and their families, personally,” the letter reads. “For most of them, life in the United States is all they know. Indeed, they are as American as our other students in every way, shape and form except on paper.

“These young people worked hard, did what was expected of them and stayed out of trouble. But even the highest achievers among them often face significant hurdles to leading productive lives simply because their parents brought them here, beyond their control and outside the legal immigration process.”

In September, [President Donald Trump announced his intention to end the DACA program](#), which was started by Barack Obama, unless Congress acted within six months to come up with a legislative replacement.

The Broad Center letter, cites statistics from the conservative CATO Institute showing that DACA program participants have about a 95 percent rate of staying in college, as opposed to two-thirds of all college students. According to the letter, DACA participants over the age of 25 are twice as likely as the national average to own their own businesses, and a quarter of them own their own homes.

“We also urge you to listen to the American people at large. Across party lines, three out of four registered voters in the United States support DACA,” the letter concludes. “We are encouraged that some Members of Congress are already working to find a solution on DACA. But we need more forward progress. Congress must find a permanent, meaningful, bipartisan solution as swiftly as possible to help these young people and, indeed, our entire nation.”

Hammond explained his reasons for signing the letter on Monday:

“Dreamers are a special group of young adults who trusted the promise of the previous administration and took proper steps to register and identify themselves, as well as pay the required fees,” Hammond wrote in an email. “Simply put, they followed the rules and laws that were set in place. Now, a new administration is threatening to penalize them because of their integrity. This is not fair.

“The United States is home to these young people who are leading productive lives. Congress now has the responsibility, and a directive from the President of the United States, to find a resolution which provides a path for Dreamers to continue to positively impact our great nation, as well as future generations to come.”

In the 2016-17 school year, 89.4 percent of Ontario-Montclair students were Hispanic or Latino, according to the California Department of Education, compared to 64.6 percent of students in San Bernardino County and 54.2 percent of California students.

In addition to Hammond, other California educators who signed the letter include Matt Hill, superintendent of Burbank Unified; Thelma Meléndez de Santa Ana, state trustee of Inglewood Unified; Cristina de Jesus, president and chief executive officer of Green Dot Public Schools – California; Joan Sullivan, chief executive officer of Partnership for Los Angeles Schools; and Nancy Albarrán, superintendent of San Jose Unified.