



# CSCU

Mark E. Ojakian  
*President*

January 13, 2017

The Honorable Chris Murphy  
136 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Murphy:

First and foremost on behalf of the more than 85,000 students who are part of the Connecticut State Colleges & Universities (CSCU), I want to thank you for your steadfast support. Your consistent advocacy at the federal level ensures we have the critical resources we need to provide our students with the high quality educational experiences they deserve.

I am writing to you and the entire Connecticut Congressional delegation to request your support for the bipartisan Bar Removal of Individuals who Dream and Grow our Economy (BRIDGE) Act which was reintroduced in the Senate yesterday, with companion legislation expected in the House. As you know, Connecticut believes in accessible and affordable public higher education for all of our citizens, including those who are undocumented. Our institutions welcome students from all walks of life and support their educational goals and dreams, not only because it is the right thing to do, but because investing in all our students improves the sustainability of our communities and the economic competitiveness of our state. In fact, one of our institutions, Eastern CT State University, was selected to participate in a national pilot program fully funded by TheDream.US to provide access to higher education for students locked out by their home states. Currently 46 students are thriving in this special program.

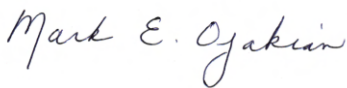
Without protections from the federal government, our students will be vulnerable to the forces that would keep them from our institutions and potentially our country because of their immigration status and that of their parents. We will continue to unequivocally support our undocumented students and provide whatever legal or other services are available during this uncertain time. Recently, along with the 17 presidents of the CSCU institutions, I signed a letter of support for the DACA program (Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals) together with over 600 college and university presidents from across the country. These DACA students, of which there are more than 5,000 projected in our state, have demonstrated a profound desire and dedication to pursue their education and we should protect them from those that would deny them this educational opportunity.

Crucial to sustain these and other efforts, now more than ever, is the BRIDGE Act, originally introduced in December of 2016 by Senator Dick Durbin (D-IL) and Senator Lindsey Graham (R-SC), and reintroduced yesterday for the 115<sup>th</sup> Congress. This bill would extend provisional protective presence for three years to any undocumented immigrant who meets the same basic criteria of DACA. Additionally, it would impose restrictions on the sharing of information in DACA and provisional protected presence applications with U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement and U.S. Customs and Border Protection for purposes of immigration enforcement.

A number of your colleagues have indicated their intention to support the BRIDGE Act or join as cosponsors. On behalf of the CSCU system, our 17 presidents, and most importantly our students, I urge you to support the BRIDGE Act. This legislation builds on years of effort at the state and local levels to ensure access and safety to some of our most vulnerable students. Above all, it is a testament to the values on which our country and our state were founded and the respect and dignity with which we should treat all those who live here.

If there are ways that I, our presidents or staff can be helpful in support of your advocacy of this legislation, please let us know. We are always available should you have any questions.

Sincerely,



Mark E. Ojakian  
President, Connecticut State Colleges & Universities

James Lombella  
President, Asnuntuck Community College

Daisy Cocco De Filippis  
President, Naugatuck Valley Community College

Wilfredo Nieves  
President, Capital Community College

Michael Rooke  
President, Northwestern CT Community College

Zulma R. Toro  
President, Central Connecticut State University

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