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A promise to Dreamers worth keeping

We must protect vulnerable students affected by DACA change

 **NICK DONOHUE** Sep 8, 2017

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AS STUDENTS RETURN to school this week, many will face the humdrum childhood challenges that each new year brings – subjects to conquer, friends to meet, and challenges to overcome. Some, however, enter the classroom facing a country where their protections are crumbling around them, set into motion by President Trump's Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program.

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Data from the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services shows nearly 14,600 people with protections established under DACA. Instead of entering a new academic year with

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successful careers, this week's announcement leaves families and children frightened about the uncertainty of what comes next in a country that promised them the opportunities all Americans deserve.

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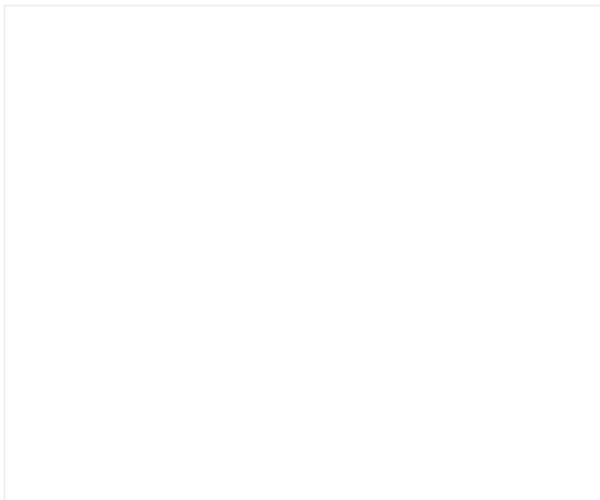


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This troubling news calls into question the ability and willingness of our public institutions to protect the most vulnerable among us. For years, our public schools have been an essential asset in this work, contributing to the preparation of our future civic leaders, innovators and employees who will drive our economy forward to remain competitive in the 21st century. As stewards of this important public institution, we have a duty to provide safe, enriching settings where young people from diverse backgrounds can learn and contribute back to our democracy. But educators cannot be expected to do so alone – particularly not in the face of a federal government that continues to construct barriers, sometimes literal ones, keeping those who wish to contribute to the success of our nation from doing so.

That is why it is all the more urgent to stand with the schools and organizations supporting Dreamers on a daily basis – not only to fight against the administration's decision, but to make sure that these young people who have become integral to our communities continue to feel welcome, respected and heard. Here in Boston, [Sociedad Latina](#) is an example of this important work by serving 1,000 youth and families of diverse migration histories and immigration statuses every year, and we at the Nellie Mae Education Foundation are proud to support them and other worthy organizations that work daily to serve the

interests of all students. This Roxbury-based organization celebrates positive Latino and cultural identities through civic engagement, academic support, [workforce readiness](#) and arts & culture initiatives that help participants to navigate through today's challenging post-electoral landscape.



In addition to the moral and ethical concerns Trump's actions provoke, anyone interested in a thriving economy and thriving communities should be concerned as well. Dreamers are a reminder about the power of ambition, hard work and hope in the hands of those who have had too little of the latter. In a recent [survey](#) of Dreamers released by the Center for American Progress, 93 percent of respondents over age 25 were employed, with more than 60 percent saying that they got a job that better fit their long-term career goals after their DACA applications were approved. Many were able to buy their first cars, and start their own businesses thanks to this program and the supportive educators and communities who prepared them for a career.

All of us for whom these seem like merely empathic concerns and not personal threats benefit from a privilege that we neither earned nor fully understand. As such, it is our obligation to stand with Dreamers and the education systems that serves them. Students must feel safe, included, respected, and heard in their schools and communities to be successful. It is encouraging to see our elected officials along with business, community and higher education leaders pledge their support for Dreamers in the face of an administration that does not value their contributions nor their futures. However, the current political climate has made it very clear that we need more action.

Recent incidents of oppression and inequity are not isolated from each other and they are not ceasing. They represent a troubling pattern of privilege and power run amok, and they demand that those of us who

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benefit from privilege stand with those who are being driven further into anonymity through no fault of their own, and we must do so publicly, proudly, and prominently.

Nick Donohue is President & CEO of the Nellie Mae Education Foundation, the largest philanthropic organization in New England focused exclusively on education.

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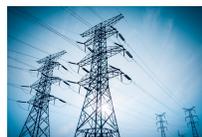
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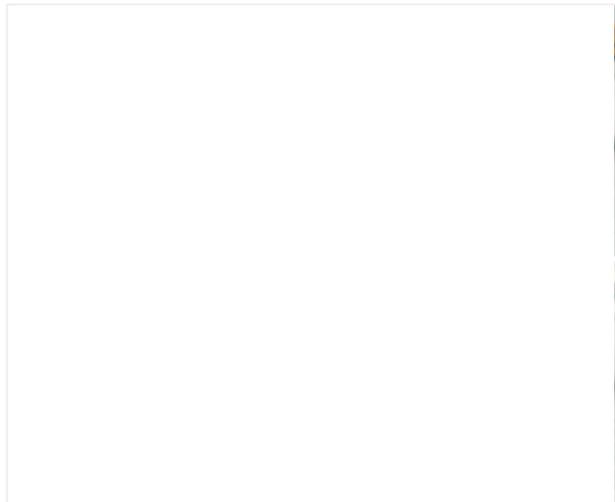


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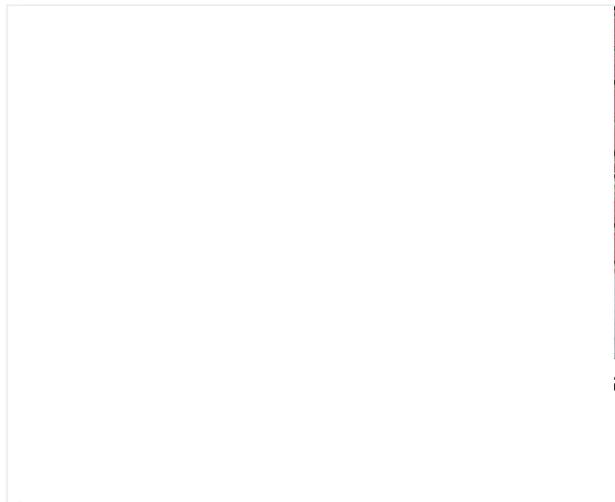
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