

September 20, 2017

Hon. Paul D. Ryan
Speaker of the United States House of Representatives
1233 Longworth House Office Bldg.
Washington, DC 20515

Re: Downtown Madison, Inc.'s support for a path to citizenship for "Dreamers"

Dear Speaker Ryan:

Downtown Madison, Inc. (DMI) is a downtown advocacy organization comprising 1,700 business, individual, non-profit, and other members, governed by a 50-member Board of Directors. We have worked for over 35 years to foster a healthy and growing economy, and an open and welcoming culture, in downtown Madison, knowing that the strength of our region is directly affected by the vitality of the downtown. We believe that our efforts, among those of other businesses, groups, and educational institutions, have encouraged and driven the dramatic population, job, and economic growth in the Madison region in the past decade, contributing to the overall health of Wisconsin's economy.

We are convinced that to enable the Madison region – and Wisconsin generally – to keep ahead of the curve, and to continue to grow and remain competitive globally, we must welcome a full spectrum of residents, students, visitors, and members of the workforce to the Madison region. Given DMI's ethic of embracing all who seek to live, visit, and work in Madison, and our commitment to increasing opportunities for all those who seek to fully participate in the cultural and economic life of our city, we ask that you support a permanent legislative solution, such as the Dream Act 2017, that provides Dreamers with a path to citizenship.

As you know, DACA allows undocumented immigrants brought to the United States as children to remain here lawfully. These young "Dreamers" seek only what we all want for our children: the opportunity to pursue an education, have a fulfilling career, and contribute to their community. To remove them from their homes, families, jobs, and communities just as they begin their adult lives is not only antithetical to the values of our community and our state, but will be detrimental to our local, regional, and state economies.

Like the entire United States, Wisconsin is becoming increasingly urban and diverse. Since 1990, Wisconsin's population has increased from 67.3% to 70.15 % urban. Downtown Madison is the hub of our region, with a strong business presence that offers many good jobs at different levels. Our employers need workers at all levels of skill, ability, and training to sustain and grow the economic health of our downtown, and the young people affected by DACA are among the very people we need to fill these jobs—they are part of our future.

This labor shortage is an impediment not only for the local economy, but for Wisconsin as a whole. A Wisconsin Manufacturers & Commerce (WMC) survey taken June of 2017 found that despite economic optimism, 77% of employers state-wide report having trouble finding workers to fill jobs, up from 70% a year ago and 53% in the summer of 2014. Not surprisingly, 44% said that labor availability was the top concern facing their business, up from 30% just six months ago. As Wisconsin Secretary of Labor Ray Allen has prominently noted time and time again, workforce development is the new economic development. In short, for Madison's – and Wisconsin's – economies to thrive, we must have a strong supply of labor. Requiring a deep, diverse, and talented pool of 800,000 young "Dreamers" to leave the United States will only further increase the deficit of workers that we are currently experiencing in our city, region, and state, and will harm Wisconsin's businesses and economy.

We urge the Administration and you and the other members of Congress to reject taking any action to deprive the 800,000 "Dreamers" in the U.S. of the protections they have enjoyed, and to promptly enact legislation that provides them with a path to citizenship.

Respectfully,

Stacy Nemeth/DMI Board Chair

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Stacy M. Nemeth".

Susan Schmitz/DMI President

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Susan Schmitz".