

Voces de la Frontera: Celebrates to new DACA bills

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(Wisconsin) – Earlier this week, the Wisconsin State Legislature introduced a package of bi-partisan bills that opens the door for recipients of DACA, Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals, to obtain professional licenses that are otherwise not available to them. Affected industries include nursing, teaching, engineering, trade professions, and more. These bills would offer greater access to career and employment opportunities to the state’s roughly 6,000 DACA recipients, and provide a solution to the growing concern of a shrinking workforce. Another bill would address the concern of a statewide decline in university enrollment by providing access to in-state tuition at the UW System, which currently treats Wisconsin students with DACA status as international students, requiring them to pay out-of-state tuition even though the majority of these students have spent their lives in state and graduated from Wisconsin high schools or secured their GED/HSED. An additional proposal would create an application for DACA recipients to receive a \$250 tax credit to offset their bi-annual required fees that total to nearly \$500, addressing one of many hidden costs of not having permanent protected status. Earlier last month, [another DACA bill](#) that was introduced would allow DACA recipients to serve as law enforcement in Wisconsin. [During a Monday press conference](#), Republican co-sponsor Rep. John Macco, (R-Ledgeview) said that the bills are expected to go before committee next week. Members of Voces de la Frontera’s youth arm, Youth Empowered in the Struggle (YES) have been on the frontlines to win in-state tuition in Wisconsin from 2009-2011 (repealed by Former Governor Walker in 2011) and the national movement to win DACA in 2012, under the Obama Administration over 11 years ago. Despite grassroots popular support across political lines, the Dream Act has failed to pass the US Congress since it was first introduced in 2001 and DACA was a movement demand led by youths under the banner “undocumented and unafraid” to secure a temporary protected status. Throughout the years the program has faced numerous legal threats and attacks by

anti-immigrant extremists. Since its implementation, [There has been countless research](#) that supports the benefits that DACA recipients bring to this country. In Wisconsin alone, DACA recipients and DACA-eligible individuals paid an estimated \$15.9 million in state and local taxes in 2018 according to [The Institute on Taxation and Economic Policy](#). **In response, Christine Neumann-Ortiz, Executive Director of Voces de la Frontera said:** “It is good to see bipartisanship on bills that recognize DACA recipients as an essential part of our workforce. Voces de la Frontera’s members and youth are committed as always to engage in the legislative process to secure in-state tuition for DACA recipients, a modest tax exemption to help defray the cost of renewing their work visas, and access to state professional licenses. This progress is a testament to the growth and grassroots organizing by the Latinx and immigrant community that in recent years has demonstrated powerfully their economic power through ‘A Day Without Latinxs and Immigrants’ defeating state and local anti-sanctuary bills, engaging at the civic level in their communities, and turning out to vote in elections. Voces de la Frontera will continue to build out the statewide Coalition for Safe Roads with our allies, to advance restoring state driver licenses/IDs to Wisconsin’s larger immigrant community. Voces de la Frontera will continue to advocate for expanded in-state tuition for all undocumented youth in Wisconsin who can no longer be eligible for DACA, as well as access to state funds for all immigrant youth to pursue higher education. Coming from working class families, even in-state tuition, ranging from \$6,000-\$10,000 a year, is an economic barrier without access to state or federal funds.” Speaking to [CBS58](#), Voces de la Frontera member and DACA recipient, Daniel Gutierrez Ayala who is currently an undergraduate student said, “I still had to pay a significant amount out of pocket, approximately about \$10,000 a year. There was a couple of semesters where I just wasn’t able to get back to...enrolling in classes just because I didn’t have the funds or the means to get back.” Gutierrez Ayala came to Wisconsin at age of three, and has called Milwaukee home for over two decades. As a current DACA recipient, he holds a temporary work permit and protection from deportation. He currently works at [Soberalski Immigration Law](#) and dreams of going to law school.