September 5, 2017

Dear Speaker DeLeo and Senate President Rosenberg,

I write on behalf of the nine state university presidents, our faculty, staff and students to ask you to take immediate action to protect all Massachusetts public higher education students by supporting H:2231 and S:668, An Act to ensure tuition equity for Massachusetts residents. These bills, filed at our request by Representative Mike Moran and Senator Harriette Chandler, amend the General Laws and will allow public higher education institutions to continue to extend in-state tuition rates to previously qualifying undocumented students, covered under the federal program known as DACA (Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals). Passage of this legislation would allow DACA students in Massachusetts to continue to receive the in-state tuition rate, regardless of changes made to the program by the Federal Government.

Currently, our public higher education institutions extend the “in-state” tuition rate to public higher education students residing in Massachusetts for 12 continuous months. If someone has not lived in the Commonwealth for a year prior to applying for admission to our public college and universities, that person will pay the "out-of-state" tuition rate. In 2012, President Barack Obama issued an Executive Order - Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals or DACA, requiring states to extend in-state tuition rates to certain undocumented residents who entered this country as children (under 16 years old) and entered the United States before June 15, 2007. Since that time, the Massachusetts Department of Higher Education has updated campus tuition and fee guidelines, and in compliance with federal order, extends in-state tuition rates to any student who meets the qualifying criteria under the Presidential Executive Order of DACA.

However, President Trump announced today his intention to eliminate the DACA order, leaving thousands of our Massachusetts students ineligible for the in-state tuition rate at our public colleges. The Chandler/Moran bill(s) will amend the General Laws and allow public higher education institutions to continue to extend the in-state tuition rate to previously qualifying students. Simply put, passage of the bill would allow us to continue what we have done for the past several years and extend to all our Massachusetts students in-state tuition.

Please note that the attached bill is NOT the same legislation commonly referred to as the "Dream Act" filed in Congress as well as filed as a bill in the Massachusetts General Court. The (so-called) Dream Act would extend the in-state tuition rate to unauthorized/undocumented students attending public higher education institutions and provide state financial aid to qualifying students attending a public or private higher education institution in Massachusetts. The presidents also support and endorse the passage of this bill.

Sincerely,

Vincent A. Pedone
Executive Officer
State University Council of Presidents