



May 4, 2020

The Honorable Ralph Northam Governor
111 East Broad Street
Richmond, Virginia 23219

Dear Governor Northam:

We represent a diverse group of organizations with members from Virginia's business community, equality and justice groups and social service providers. As we continue to struggle through the COVID-19 crisis, it is critical that all sectors of our community, especially hard-working immigrants and their families, not be forgotten.

Immigrants are on the front lines supporting the rest of us with daily essentials. They are harvesting our food and working on the production lines of companies such as Smithfield Ham and Tyson Chicken. They are not protected with adequate PPE and cannot raise their voices to advocate for themselves. In short, they are risking their health and safety to help us.

When immigrants are asked why they are risking so much, the overwhelming response is: "I want a better life for my children. I am working to give them an education." [The purpose of this letter is to ask you to help the children of these immigrants, our undocumented youth, regardless of status, continue with their education at Virginia's colleges and universities.](#) These undocumented students graduated from Virginia's public schools and are striving to obtain the necessary skills to give back to the only place they have ever called home. We need their talent and their drive to jump start Virginia's economy.

Many undocumented students are in high-demand workforce tracks, studying to be nurses, teachers and technology managers. Yet, they must work while attending school. However, because of COVID-19, they have suffered reductions in their retail and service-related jobs. Undocumented students must help meet their families' housing costs, pay for transportation, and sometimes secure child care for their children. Covering these day-to-day living expenses makes it difficult for them to pay their college expenses.

We are asking that an emergency fund be made available to public and private colleges and universities that is earmarked to help all undocumented students, regardless of status, remain in school. These emergency funds could be used to help offset the costs of tuition and books or given directly to students to help them cover their necessary living expenses. While schools may exercise discretion on the actual amount distributed, a grant of up to \$6,345 per student per academic year could help address these needs. We believe that a grant of up to \$6,345 per student is an equitable amount given that this is the maximum amount per academic year awarded per Pell Grant. Such a grant would put undocumented students on par with their peers and make a meaningful difference in their lives.

This action would restore hope for the many immigrant families who are doing so much for us. Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Emma Violand-Sanchez".

Emma Violand-Sanchez, Founder & Chair
Dream Project

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Lizzette Arias".

Lizzette Arias, Executive Director
Dream Project



Irma Becerra, Ph.D., President
Marymount University



Ann Holton, Interim President
George Mason University



Dr. Anne Kress, President
Northern Virginia Community College



Tram Nguyen, Co-Executive Director
New Virginia Majority



May Nivar, Founding Member/Chair
Asian & Latino Solidarity Alliance



Sookyung Oh, D.C. Area Director
NAKASEC



Cc: Clark Mercer
Matt Mansell
Peter Blake
Secretary Atif Qarni