

September 19, 2013

Senator John Boozman
1401 West Capitol Avenue, Plaza F
Little Rock, Arkansas 72201

Congressman Rick Crawford
2400 Highland Drive, Suite 300
Jonesboro, Arkansas 72401

Senator Mark Pryor
500 Clinton Avenue, Suite 401
Little Rock, Arkansas 72201

Congressman Tim Griffin
1501 North University Avenue, Suite 150
Little Rock, Arkansas 72207

Congressman Tom Cotton
100 Reserve Street, Suite 307
Hot Springs, Arkansas 71901

Congressman Steve Womack
3333 Pinnacle Hills, Suite 120
Rogers, Arkansas 72758

Dear Arkansas Delegation:

As leaders of Arkansas' two-year and four-year colleges and universities, educating the next generation of entrepreneurs, scientists, and global pioneers, we call on you to address a critical threat to America's preeminence as the center of innovation and prosperity: our inability under current United States immigration policy to retain and capitalize on the talented individuals we are training in our universities.

Fixing our immigration system will be critical to scientific growth at Arkansas' higher education institutions and economic growth in our state. In 2009, 46 percent of the students earning Master's or PhDs in STEM fields from Arkansas' research-intensive universities were temporary residents, a group with no clear path to stay in America after graduation. More than half of our students earning engineering PhDs in recent years were also non-citizens.

Foreign-born students create jobs for Arkansas and often provide the technological innovations that drive economic growth in the state. A recent study by the Partnership for a New American Economy and the American Enterprise Institute found that for every 100 foreign-born graduates of a US Master's or PhD program who stay in America working in a STEM field, 262 jobs are created for American workers. In Arkansas, that translates into a significant employment boost: our share of foreign-born STEM advanced degree holders working in STEM fields grew by 303 percent between 2000 and 2010.

Our students often go on to start companies, which support communities and create jobs. Immigrants are more than twice as likely to start a business and immigrant-owned businesses in Arkansas generate about \$287 million in income for the state each year.

Our educational institutions thrive when all of Arkansas' industries thrive, and research shows that passing immigration reform will benefit all sectors of the state's economy. Our \$7.5 billion agriculture sector needs workers in order to grow and expand. Immigration reform would mean more jobs for U.S. citizens and immigrants and greater production capacities for our farmers. In the housing sector, immigrants increased home values in Arkansas between 2000 and 2010 – by \$1,050 for the median home in Pulaski County.

Many of our bright future students came to this country as children and have been unable to take advantage of an American education and contribute to our economy because of their status. A

recent study found that incentivizing these children to pursue college education by passing the DREAM Act would add 1.4 million jobs and generate \$329 billion in economic activity over the next 20 years. In fact, creating a pathway to citizenship for all undocumented immigrants will have a positive effect for our state's economy. According to a study by Regional Economic Models, Inc., for every person who enrolls, an estimated \$5,554 will be added to our Gross State Product by 2020.

Our current immigration system creates real obstacles to growth. Low limits on high-skilled visas leave immigrants with no way to stay after earning a diploma or they face untenable delays for a permanent visa. Low limits on low-skilled visas leave farmers struggling to find the workers they need to produce, grow, and harvest. Meanwhile, too many people are living in the shadows unable to join our workforce, gain an education, and contribute to the economy they live in while we face real worker shortages and slow economic growth. For example, according to the nonpartisan advocacy group Change the Equation, from 2009 to 2011 more than 2 STEM jobs were posted online in Arkansas for every one unemployed STEM worker in the state.

Arkansas cannot afford to wait to fix our immigration system. We ask you to work together to develop a comprehensive, bipartisan solution because all parts of our economy – from education to agriculture to housing to business – need it. A recent poll shows that 67 percent of Arkansas voters support the Senate's comprehensive immigration reform bill, while 87 percent believe it is important we fix our immigration system this year. Now is the time for Washington leaders to act and ensure that the US can continue to compete on the global stage.

Sincerely,

Dr. Joel Anderson

Chancellor, University of Arkansas – Little Rock

Dr. Paul B. Beran

Chancellor, University of Arkansas – Fort Smith

Dr. Sally Carder

President, National Park Community College

Dr. Steve Cole

Chancellor, Cossatot Community College of the University of Arkansas

Dr. Glen Fenter

President, Mid-South Community College

Dr. Margaret Ellibee

President, Pulaski Technical College

Dr. Jack Lassiter

Chancellor, University of Arkansas – Monticello

Skip Rutherford

Dean, University of Arkansas Clinton School for Public Service