



September 19, 2013

Dear Louisiana Congressional Delegation:

As leaders of Louisiana's universities, educating the next generation of entrepreneurs, scientists, and global citizens, 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 benefit from the talented individuals we are training in our universities.

Fixing our immigration system will be critical to advancing research in the sciences at Louisiana's universities and economic growth in our state. In 2009, 60 percent of the students earning Master's or PhDs in STEM fields from Louisiana's research-intensive universities were on temporary student visas, a group with no clear path to stay in America after graduation. More than 70 percent of our students earning engineering PhDs in recent years were also international students.

International students who are allowed to remain in the U.S. create jobs for Louisiana 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 graduate of a US Master's or PhD program who stays in the U.S. working in a STEM field, 262 jobs are created for American workers.

While U.S. born graduates our universities students often go on to start companies-- which support communities and create jobs-- immigrants are more than twice as likely to start a business. Immigrant-owned businesses in Louisiana generate about \$691 million in income for the state each year.

Research shows that passing immigration reform will benefit all sectors of the state's economy. Our \$2.6 billion agriculture sector needs more workers in order to grow and expand. Immigration reform would mean more jobs for U.S. citizen and immigrant agricultural workers and greater production capacities for our farmers. In the housing sector, immigrant home-buyers help to increase home values throughout Louisiana. Between 2000 and 2010, they were responsible for a \$1,373 increase in the median price of homes in Jefferson Parish.

Many promising students who came to this country as children and have been unable to take advantage of an American higher education, contribute to our economy, and develop their full human potential because of their immigration 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 for earned citizenship for all undocumented immigrants will lead to significant economic gains for all Americans by increasing productivity, wages, and tax revenue and by supporting the creation of new jobs through the growth in consumption and business creation.

More importantly, it will allow families to stay together and hard working immigrants with deep roots in this country to become full members of American society.

Recent polls show that 70 percent of Louisiana voters support the Senate's comprehensive immigration reform bill, while 86 percent believe it is important we fix our immigration system this year. Inaction is not an option--Louisiana cannot afford to wait to fix our immigration system. We ask you to work together to develop a comprehensive, bipartisan solution that ensures the U.S. can continue to compete on the global stage, reflects our values, and moves us forward together.

Sincerely,

Dr. Walter Kimbrough

President

Dillard University

Father Kevin Wildes

President

Loyola University

Dr. Ronald Mason, Jr.

President

Southern University System