Dear Mr. President,

We write as law professors whose teaching and scholarship focus on matters of U.S. immigration and citizenship law. This letter addresses an issue that may arise as agencies and officials within the Executive Branch consider various administrative options in cases involving potential beneficiaries of the Development, Relief, and Education for Alien Minors (DREAM) Act.

In assessing the options that may be available to the Executive Branch, the threshold question is whether there is executive authority to grant administrative relief. This is the question addressed in this letter. Though your Administration has considered various forms of prosecutorial discretion for individual DREAM-eligible applicants, this letter highlights the administrative authority that is available to potential DREAM Act beneficiaries as a group. We offer no views on the policy dimensions of a decision to exercise or to not exercise this authority. We write only to explain that there is clear executive authority for several forms of administrative relief for DREAM Act beneficiaries: deferred action, parole–in–place, and deferred enforced departure.

**Deferred action** is a long–standing form of administrative relief, originally known as “nonpriority enforcement status.”\(^1\) It is one of many forms of prosecutorial discretion available to the Executive Branch. A grant of deferred action can have any of several effects, depending on the timing of the grant. It can prevent an individual from being placed in removal proceedings, suspend any proceedings that have commenced, or stay the enforcement of any existing removal order.\(^2\) It also makes the recipient eligible to apply

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2. Practitioners have reported that, in recent months, some DHS officials have taken the position that deferred action is available only to individuals who are in removal proceedings. At the same time, these officials maintain that once a removal case has been administratively closed, deferred action is no longer available. This position is inconsistent with DHS’s prior practice. See Citizenship and Immigration Services
for employment authorization. General authority for deferred action exists under Immigration and Nationality Act (INA) § 103(a), 8 U.S.C. § 1103(a), which grants the Secretary of Homeland Security the authority to enforce the immigration laws. Though no statutes or regulations delineate deferred action in specific terms, the U.S. Supreme Court has made clear that decisions to initiate or terminate enforcement proceedings fall squarely within the authority of the Executive. In the immigration context, the Executive Branch has exercised its general enforcement authority to grant deferred action since at least 1971. Federal courts have acknowledged the existence of this executive power at least as far back as the mid–1970s. More recently, this Administration granted deferred action in June 2009 to widows and children of U.S. citizens while legislation to grant them statutory relief was under consideration.

Parole–in–place refers to a form of parole granted by the Executive Branch under the authority of INA § 212(d)(5), 8 U.S.C. § 1182(d)(5). Under this provision, the Attorney General “may . . . in his discretion parole into the United States temporarily under such conditions as he may prescribe only on a case–by–case basis for urgent humanitarian reasons or significant public benefit any alien applying for admission to the United States.” Parole permits a noncitizen to remain lawfully in the United States, although parole does not constitute an “admission” under the INA. Individuals who have been paroled are eligible for work authorization. Under this express authority, previous Presidents have granted parole to noncitizens who did not qualify for admission under existing immigration law. For example, President Jimmy Carter exercised parole authority...
to allow Cubans into the United States in 1980.\textsuperscript{9} President Bill Clinton did the same in 1994.\textsuperscript{10} More recently, this Administration granted parole in January 2010 to Haitian orphans who were in the process of being adopted by U.S. citizens.\textsuperscript{11} In May 2010, this Administration adopted the current practice of granting parole to spouses, parents, and children of U.S. citizens serving in the military.\textsuperscript{12} Though the text of the statute calls for case–by–case discretion, both historical and current practice make clear that such discretionary judgments may be based on group circumstances.\textsuperscript{13} And, as the Supreme Court has made plain, the Administration’s use of group circumstances as a basis for decision–making would be entitled to deference.\textsuperscript{14}

\textit{Deferred enforced departure}, often referred to as DED, is a form of prosecutorial discretion that is closely related to deferred action. Almost every Administration since President Dwight D. Eisenhower has granted DED or the analogous “Extended Voluntary Departure” to at least one group of noncitizens.\textsuperscript{15} As with deferred action, executive authority to grant deferred enforced departure and extended voluntary departure exists under the general authority to enforce the immigration laws as set out in INA § 103(a), 8 U.S.C. § 1103(a).\textsuperscript{16} Though Temporary Protected Status (TPS) in INA § 244, 8 U.S.C. § 1254a, has largely superseded the use of DED in practice, DHS’s statutory authority for granting DED on bases other than nationality remains intact, and the President retains his inherent authority with respect to DED. Most recently, this Administration granted DED to Liberians in March 2009.\textsuperscript{17} Though DED has been used in response to disturbed conditions in specific countries, there is nothing in the statutory authority for DED that limits its use to such situations. Recipients of DED are eligible to apply for work authorization.\textsuperscript{18}


\textsuperscript{10} See id.


\textsuperscript{13} For a discussion of the historical use of the parole power, see, e.g., Arthur C. Helton, \textit{Immigration Parole Power: Toward Flexible Responses to Migration Emergencies}, 71 Interpreter Releases 1637 (Dec. 12, 1994). For examples of more recent categorical grants of parole, see \textit{supra} notes 11 and 12.


\textsuperscript{18} 8 C.F.R. § 274a.12(c)(14).
These three forms of administrative relief differ in their requirements and consequences. In this letter, we do not reach these questions of specific application. Our purpose in writing is more limited and straightforward: to explain that the Executive Branch has the authority to grant these three forms of administrative relief to some significant number of DREAM Act beneficiaries, and that it has done so both historically and recently in similar situations.

Respectfully yours,

Hiroshi Motomura
Susan Westerberg Prager Professor of Law
UCLA School of Law*

David Abraham
Professor of Law
University of Miami School of Law

Muneer I. Ahmad
Clinical Professor of Law
Yale Law School

Raquel Aldana
Professor of Law
University of the Pacific
McGeorge School of Law

Deborah Anker
Clinical Professor of Law
Director, Harvard Immigration and Refugee Clinical Program
Harvard Law School

Angela M. Banks
Associate Professor
William & Mary School of Law

* All institutional affiliations indicated for identification purposes only.
Signatures continued*

Melynda H. Barnhart
Associate Professor
New York Law School

Linda Bosniak
Professor of Law
Rutgers University School of Law-Camden

Richard Boswell
Professor of Law
University of California, Hastings
College of the Law

Allison Brownell Tirres
Assistant Professor
DePaul University College of Law

Kristina M. Campbell
Assistant Professor of Law
Director, Immigration and Human Rights Clinic
University of the District of Columbia
David A. Clarke School of Law

Stacy Caplow
Professor of Law
Brooklyn Law School

Ming Hsu Chen
Associate Professor
University of Colorado Law School

Gabriel J. Chin
Professor of Law
University of California, Davis School of Law

Michael J. Churgin
Raybourne Thompson Centennial Professor in Law
The University of Texas at Austin

Marisa S. Cianciarulo
Associate Professor of Law
Director, Bette & Wylie Aitken Family Violence Clinic
Chapman University

Adam B. Cox
Professor of Law
New York University School of Law

Keith Cunningham-Parmeter
Associate Professor of Law
Willamette University College of Law

Alina Das
Assistant Professor of Clinical Law
New York University School of Law

Johanna K.P. Dennis
Associate Professor of Law
Southern University Law Center

Ingrid V. Eagly
Acting Professor of Law
UCLA School of Law

Jill E. Family
Associate Professor of Law
Widener University School of Law

Niels W. Frenzen
Clinical Professor of Law
Gould School of Law
University of Southern California

Maryellen Fullerton
Professor of Law
Brooklyn Law School

* All institutional affiliations indicated for identification purposes only.
Signatures continued*

César Cuauhtémoc García Hernández  
Assistant Professor  
Capital University Law School

Lauren Gilbert  
Professor of Law  
St. Thomas University School of Law

Denise Gilman  
Clinical Professor  
Co-Director, Immigration Clinic  
University of Texas School of Law

Jennifer Gordon  
Professor of Law  
Fordham University School of Law

Pratheepan Gulasekaram  
Assistant Professor of Law  
Santa Clara University

Anjum Gupta  
Assistant Professor of Law  
Director, Immigrant Rights Clinic  
Rutgers School of Law - Newark

Jonathan Hafetz  
Associate Professor of Law  
Seton Hall University School of Law

Barbara Hines  
Clinical Professor of Law  
Co-Director, Immigration Clinic  
University of Texas School of Law

Geoffrey A. Hoffman  
Clinical Associate Professor and  
Director, University of Houston  
Immigration Clinic  
University of Houston Law Center

Alan Hyde  
Distinguished Professor and Sidney  
Reitman Scholar  
Rutgers University School of Law

Kate Jastram  
Lecturer in Residence  
Senior Fellow, Miller Institute for Global  
Challenges and the Law  
University of California, Berkeley School of Law

Michael Kagan  
Associate Professor  
William S. Boyd School of Law  
University of Nevada, Las Vegas

Daniel Kanstroom  
Professor of Law and  
Director, International Human Rights  
Program  
Boston College Law School

Kathleen Kim  
Professor of Law  
Loyola Law School, Los Angeles

David C. Koelsch  
Associate Professor and  
Director, Immigration Law Clinic  
University of Detroit Mercy School of Law

Sylvia R. Lazos  
Justice Myron Leavitt Professor  
William S. Boyd School of Law  
University of Nevada, Las Vegas

Stephen Lee  
Assistant Professor of Law  
University of California, Irvine

* All institutional affiliations indicated for identification purposes only.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Affiliation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jennifer Lee Koh</td>
<td>Assistant Professor of Law, Western State University College of Law</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beth Lyon</td>
<td>Professor of Law, Villanova University School of Law</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lynn Marcus</td>
<td>Professor of the Practice, Co-Director, Immigration Law Clinic, University of Arizona Rogers College of Law</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peter L. Markowitz</td>
<td>Associate Clinical Professor of Law, Benjamin N. Cardozo School of Law</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fatma E. Marouf</td>
<td>Associate Professor of Law, Co-Director of the Immigration Clinic, William S. Boyd School of Law, University of Nevada, Las Vegas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elizabeth McCormick</td>
<td>Associate Clinical Professor of Law, University of Tulsa College of Law</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Karla McKanders</td>
<td>Associate Professor of Law, University of Tennessee, College of Law</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Michelle McKinley</td>
<td>Associate Professor, University of Oregon School of Law</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M. Isabel Medina</td>
<td>Ferris Family Distinguished Professor of Law, Loyola University New Orleans College of Law</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jennifer Moore</td>
<td>Regents Professor of Law, University of New Mexico School of Law</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daniel Morales</td>
<td>Assistant Professor, DePaul University College of Law</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nancy Morawetz</td>
<td>Professor of Clinical Law, New York University School of Law</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Karen Musalo</td>
<td>Clinical Professor of Law &amp; Director, Center for Gender &amp; Refugee Studies, University of California, Hastings College of the Law</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Noah Benjamin Novogrodsky</td>
<td>Associate Professor of Law, University of Wyoming College of Law</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mariela Olivares</td>
<td>Assistant Professor of Law, Howard University School of Law</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Michael A. Olivas</td>
<td>William B. Bates Distinguished Chair in Law, University of Houston Law Center</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sarah H. Paoletti</td>
<td>Practice Associate Professor, Director, Transnational Legal Clinic, University of Pennsylvania School of Law</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
re: Executive authority to grant administrative relief for DREAM Act beneficiaries

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Signatures continued*

Huyen Pham
Professor of Law
Texas Wesleyan University School of Law

Polly J. Price
Professor of Law
Emory University School of Law

Nina Rabin
Associate Clinical Professor of Law
Director, Bacon Immigration Law and Policy Program
James E. Rogers College of Law, University of Arizona

Jaya Ramji-Nogales
Associate Professor of Law
Temple University, Beasley School of Law

Jayesh Rathod
Assistant Professor of Law
American University Washington College of Law

Maritza Reyes
Assistant Professor of Law
Florida A&M University College of Law

Ediberto Roman
Professor of Law & Director of Citizenship and Immigration Initiatives
Florida International University

Victor C. Romero
Maureen B. Cavanaugh Distinguished Faculty Scholar & Professor of Law
The Pennsylvania State University, Dickinson School of Law

Rachel E. Rosenbloom
Assistant Professor
Northeastern University School of Law

Kevin Ruser
M.S. Hevelone Professor of Law
Director of Clinical Programs
University of Nebraska-Lincoln College of Law

Leticia M. Saucedo
Professor of Law
University of California, Davis School of Law

Michael Scaperlanda
Edwards Family Chair in Law
University of Oklahoma College of Law

Irene Scharf
Professor of Law
University of Massachusetts School of Law – Dartmouth

Andrew I. Schoenholtz
Visiting Professor of Law
Georgetown University Law Center

Philip G. Schrag
Delaney Family Professor of Public Interest Law
Georgetown University Law Center

Rachel Settlage
Assistant Professor
Wayne State Law School

* All institutional affiliations indicated for identification purposes only.
re: Executive authority to grant administrative relief for DREAM Act beneficiaries

Signatures continued*

Ragini Shah
Associate Clinical Professor of Law
Suffolk University Law School

Rebecca Sharpless
Associate Clinical Professor
University of Miami School of Law

Dan R. Smulian
Associate Professor of Clinical Law
Safe Harbor Project
BLS Legal Services Corporation
Brooklyn Law School

Gemma Solimene
Clinical Associate Professor of Law
Fordham University School of Law

Jayashri Srikantiah
Professor of Law &
Director, Immigrants’ Rights Clinic
Stanford Law School

Juliet P. Stumpf
Professor of Law
Lewis & Clark Law School

Maureen A. Sweeney
Clinical Instructor
Immigration Clinic
University of Maryland Francis King Carey School of Law

Margaret Taylor
Professor of Law
Wake Forest University School of Law

David B. Thronson
Professor of Law
Michigan State University College of Law

Enid Trucios-Haynes
Professor of Law &
University Faculty Grievance Officer
Brandeis School of Law
University of Louisville

Diane Uchimiya
Professor of Law
Director of the Justice and Immigration Clinic
University of LaVerne College of Law

Katherine L. Vaughns
Professor of Law
University of Maryland Francis King Carey School of Law

Prof. Sheila I Vélez Martínez
Immigration Law Clinic
University of Pittsburgh School of Law

Leti Volpp
Professor
University of California, Berkeley School of Law

Shoba Sivaprasad Wadhia, Esq.
Clinical Professor and
Director, Center for Immigrants’ Rights
The Pennsylvania State University
The Dickinson School of Law

David P. Weber
Associate Professor of Law
Creighton Law School

Jonathan Weinberg
Professor of Law
Wayne State University

* All institutional affiliations indicated for identification purposes only.
re: Executive authority to grant administrative relief for DREAM Act beneficiaries
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Signatures continued*

Deborah M. Weissman
Reef C. Ivey II Distinguished Professor of Law
University of North Carolina School of Law

Virgil Wiebe
Professor of Law
University of St. Thomas School of Law (Minneapolis)

Michael Wishnie
William O. Douglas Clinical Professor of Law and
Director of the Jerome N. Frank Legal Services Organization
Yale Law School

Elizabeth L. Young
Associate Professor of Law
University of Arkansas School of Law – Fayetteville

* All institutional affiliations indicated for identification purposes only.