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January 25, 2017

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The Honorable Lindsey Graham
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Richard Durbin
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senators Graham and Durbin:

On behalf of the over 115,600 members and affiliates of the American Psychological Association (APA), I am writing in support of the *Bar Removal of Individuals Who Dream and Grow our Economy Act* (S. 128), more commonly known as the BRIDGE Act. I am also writing to you as an immigrant since I emigrated from Cuba at the age of 8. Hence, this is a concern that I personally experienced.

This vital bipartisan legislation offers employment authorization and temporary relief from deportation for undocumented immigrants who arrived in the United States as children and are enrolled in the Department of Homeland Security’s Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program.

APA is the leading scientific and professional organization representing psychology in the United States. Comprising researchers, educators, clinicians, consultants and students as its members, APA works to advance the creation, communication and application of psychological knowledge to benefit society and improve people’s lives. APA is committed to policies that keep families together. If DACA is discontinued, the many young immigrants forced to leave the country could suffer serious mental health problems, compounding the potentially harmful effects of fleeing traumatic circumstances in their country of origin.

As psychologists, we have learned that the combined experiences of exposure to violence and displacement from home countries at an early age can have long-lasting negative consequences for the cognitive, emotional, social, and physical development of children and young people. We do not believe that it is safe or ethical to send young immigrants back to these dangerous conditions. Furthermore, many of these young people have no recollection of, or connection with, the country of their birth.

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We strongly support the granting of protection from deportation for immigrants who grew up in the United States, ensuring that these young people can continue to work and study in safety and security.

Thank you for your leadership in drafting the BRIDGE Act. If APA can be of further assistance in this effort, please contact Serena Dávila (sdavila@apa.org or 202-336-6061) in our Public Interest Government Relations Office. Of course, I would be honored to speak or assist you in this very personal and important bill.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Antonio E. Puente".

Antonio E. Puente, PhD
President

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