September 21, 2017

The Honorable Paul D. Ryan  
Speaker of the House  
H-232 The Capitol  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Mitch McConnell  
Senate Majority Leader  
S-230 The Capitol  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi  
House Minority Leader  
H-204 The Capitol  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Charles E. Schumer  
Senate Minority Leader  
S-221 The Capitol  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Speaker Ryan and Leaders McConnell, Schumer, and Pelosi,

On behalf of the American Astronomical Society (AAS), I write to urge Congress to immediately enact a bipartisan, permanent legislative solution for those individuals protected by the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program. The administration’s intention to end DACA within six months will lead to the revocation of the legal status of hundreds of thousands of students and early career professionals, including undergraduate and graduate students, postdoctoral scholars, and career scientists in the astronomical sciences and across STEM disciplines. We strongly urge Congress to act immediately, as all of these young people will imminently be at risk for deportation and separation from their families. DACA recipients, like the millions of other undocumented people living and working in the United States, can no longer place long-term roots in their local communities or economies because of their uncertain status; instead, they must live in fear.

As scientists and educators in the astronomical sciences and across STEM, AAS members are committed to providing equal opportunity for every would-be astronomer to explore the mysteries of the cosmos. The only prerequisites for participating in the long American tradition of innovation and discovery, from the Moon to the far reaches of the universe, should be a thirst for knowledge and willingness to work hard. DACA has opened the door for young people once in the shadows to do just that, enabling them to pursue higher education and employment since 2012, and thus DACA recipients are now our students, our colleagues, and our neighbors who actively contribute not only to society by working, paying taxes, and volunteering, but also to astronomy – by studying planets around other stars, developing new space technologies, and more. As hardworking scholars, leaders, and innovators, they are invaluable members of our communities and a vital part of America’s future and scientific legacy.

A permanent legal solution for DACA recipients is essential to the hundreds of thousands of young individuals suddenly made uncertain about their future, and it is also essential to our shared commitment to the American ideal of equal opportunity. We at the AAS call on Congress to enact a permanent solution to this bipartisan issue, and stand ready to aid in this effort.

Sincerely,

Christine Jones  
President, American Astronomical Society