



Testimony from Zach Brandon to the Wisconsin Assembly Committee on Regulatory Licensing Reform
January 14, 2026

Re: Support AB 759 – Eligibility to receive occupational credentials for recipients of DACA program

Thank you, Chairman Sortwell and members of the committee. Your leadership is seen and appreciated. It would be easy to set this aside in this moment of disarray and discord. You continue to push forward not because it is politically expedient but because it's the right thing to do for these young professionals and for the economy of Wisconsin.

My name is Zach Brandon and I am President of the Greater Madison Chamber of Commerce. I am here on behalf of our board of directors in support of AB 759. This bill seeks to increase access for professional licenses to Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) recipients. This proposal provides an opportunity to address our workforce shortage, grow our state's economy and support the contributions and career aspirations of thousands of individuals here in Wisconsin.

The Greater Madison Chamber of Commerce represents more than 1,200 member businesses throughout the Greater Madison region – from new and emerging businesses in cutting-edge industries to small businesses and large enterprise. While diverse in size and industries, collectively, we are working to accelerate our region's economy and improve Wisconsin's global economic positioning.

On that front, there are many good stories to share. Our region boasts steady job growth in advanced, competitive industries, has high workforce participation and robust population growth, led by Gen Z (18–26-year-olds) net migration and new hires. In fact, our region is a top 10 metro in the country for net Gen Z migration, alongside much larger metros like Nashville and Austin. Young people are flocking to our region, which offers tremendous opportunities for our entire state. Additionally, the Madison Region continues to outpace the state's population projections. In Dane County alone, new regional estimates anticipate more than 100,000 added people above the state's forecasted growth within the next 25 years.

With these tailwinds come challenges. Despite our positive in-migration, we continue to have among the lowest unemployment rates in the country. That's great if you are looking for work, but problematic if you are a growing employer in need of workers. The demand for skilled workers currently exceeds the supply. Compounding this challenge is net negative U.S. migration declines in 2025, which new research from Brookings calculates as the lowest in decades that will continue in 2026.

Simply put, we are facing a talent imperative in our region and in our state. We must do more – now – to make our great state a place of belonging to attract, develop and ultimately retain talent.

DACA recipients are part of that opportunity – and a population that we should all want to keep here in Wisconsin. According to the American Immigration Council, the nearly 6,000 DACA recipients in Wisconsin pay more than an estimated \$20 million in state and local taxes. They are us. They are our friends, our family, our neighbors and our employees. We shop with them, we worship with them, and we work with them. They live here, they are invested here, and we should reduce barriers for them to further their academic and career aspirations here.

In our federal-level conversations, both of Wisconsin's U.S. Senators agreed that addressing workforce challenges related to immigration is something that needs to be solved. But existing federal gridlock further underscores the importance and opportunity for state solutions to balance the challenges of immigration and the potential for accelerating economic growth.

The bipartisan collaboration on this legislative package is important and commendable. I hope the committee will join us by giving its full support.

Thank you.