



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

May 5, 2025

For media inquiries please contact:

California Undocumented Higher Education Coalition
communications@collegecampaign.org, 213-346-3279

The California Undocumented Higher Education Coalition Responds to Executive Order Targeting In-State Tuition Policies

On April 28, 2025, an executive order was signed promising to “crack down” on state and local laws, such as offering postsecondary in-state tuition benefits for immigrant students. It falsely alleges that such programs prioritize undocumented individuals over American citizens and is based on an intentionally false interpretation of federal immigration law. Federal immigration law and legal precedent currently give states the power to establish in-state tuition laws. However, this order furthers inflammatory anti-immigrant sentiments in the nation and may lead to dire consequences impacting thousands of Californians and the economic prosperity of our state. This executive order is both misguided and devious.

The California Undocumented Higher Education Coalition (CUHEC) recognizes the many contributions of immigrants to our state and remains steadfast in our conviction that undocumented students are essential to California and the nation. For over two decades, California has proudly allowed eligible nonresident students to pay in-state tuition rates if they meet, regardless of immigration status, non-residency requirements. California Assembly Bill 540, signed into law in 2001, allows students who have established themselves in our state and have strong ties to our communities to pay in-state tuition and have better opportunities to achieve their academic and career goals. The reality is, for California to remain one of the strongest economies in the world and to maintain a vibrant democratic society, we must ensure that all individuals who wish to pursue higher education are able to do so, especially those from historically marginalized communities.

A core mission of postsecondary institutions is to cultivate a well-educated society, and fulfilling that mission begins by recognizing that migration happens due to social, economic, and historical factors. Immigrants are in this country to work hard, seek better lives, and make positive

contributions to our society. With the proper support to attain a higher education, undocumented students can become the doctors, teachers, engineers, and countless other professionals our workforce and society need. Without in-state tuition benefits, we shut the door of upward mobility for thousands of undocumented students and undermine the public's support and investment in their success.

We call on our state and segment leaders to stand firmly with undocumented students and continue to support their postsecondary aspirations. While many of the actions by this federal administration are mere political stunts and are not rooted in the basis of law, they cannot go unchallenged. State and segment leaders must avoid any type of preemptive compliance and continue to affirm the right of every student to higher education, regardless of immigration status. AB 540 and the integration of undocumented students are deeply embedded in California's values, and now more than ever, we must defend and uphold those principles.

CUHEC's message to students is to persist: Your determination and grit are unparalleled! Undocumented students make our country great. This coalition will continue to fight alongside you to ensure you have equal access and the additional support needed to be successful throughout college and beyond. We will not let harmful rhetoric and policies divide us. Never let obstacles like this stop you from pursuing higher education - earning a certificate or degree opens doors to countless opportunities, leads to numerous positive outcomes, and is an accomplishment no one can ever take away from you.

Coalition Leaders Speak Out:

"Undocumented student movements have always inspired SoCal CAN. The passage of AB 540 and the introduction of the federal DREAM Act coincide with the inception of our network. Standing besides undocumented students is central to our mission and the prosperity of our region. Our network will continue to strive to create pathways to better lives and fulfilling careers by ensuring all students, regardless of immigration status, have the ability to pursue a higher education, and this starts by upholding their right to pay in-state tuition."

Alison De Lucca, Executive Director, Southern California College Attainment

"The Campaign for College Opportunity proudly stands by the California Undocumented Higher Education Coalition because we believe and know that undocumented students are integral to the fabric of California and our nation. We cannot allow hateful actions, like the current administration's latest target on in-state tuition for undocumented students, to lead to retreating from our essential duty to protect educational opportunity for all who reside in America. Higher education leaders, policymakers, and advocates alike must continue to uphold our justified and lawful support of undocumented students, avoiding unnecessary preemptive

compliance, because California and our nation are made greater with the existence and contributions of undocumented students and immigrant communities.”

Jessie Ryan, President, Campaign for College Opportunity

“In our state, immigration status does not define whether you’re a Californian or not. Undocumented students who have grown up here, gone to our schools, and contribute to our communities in every way that matters are Californians. In-state tuition for undocumented students isn’t preferential treatment—it’s a rightful recognition of their place in our communities, social and economic contributions, and the values that guide California’s policies.

President Trump’s executive order is yet another politically motivated attack that scapegoats immigrant youth and undermines our state’s right to support its residents. California acted within its rights, and within its conscience, when it made higher education more accessible to all California students.

We call on California’s elected leaders, and every college and university in our state, to stand firm in defending our in-state tuition policy and in standing shoulder to shoulder with undocumented students.

To undocumented students: you belong here, and we will not stop fighting to ensure you can pursue your college dreams and build your future in the only home you’ve ever known.”

Iliana Perez, Executive Director, Immigrants Rising

###

The [California Undocumented Higher Education Coalition](#) was established in 2016 as a response to national uncertainty and an adverse climate facing undocumented students. Since then, the coalition has advocated and secured historic policy reforms that support the expansion of college opportunity for undocumented students. The coalition, comprised of educators, civil rights, business, philanthropy, students, and community-based groups, works to strengthen California’s workforce and economy by ensuring college access, affordability, and success for undocumented individuals in the state.