



March 17, 2026

Committee on the Judiciary
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative:

On behalf of our 3 million members and the 50 million students they serve, we would like to submit for the record the following comments in connection with the March 18 hearing on *Plyler v. Doe*, the landmark 1982 decision in which the Supreme Court ruled that states cannot deny students a free public K-12 education based on their immigration status.

The Plyler decision reflects the fundamental role education plays in our society. Using circumstances beyond their control to deny children an education also denies them the ability to contribute meaningfully to our society, creating a permanent underclass that includes not just immigrant children, but students with disabilities as well as homeless and foster youth. It could also become a slippery slope that limits access to public education, the foundation of our democracy, even more.

Public education has multiple functions. It imparts essential civic knowledge, provides a sense of belonging, develops the skills students need to become productive adults, and helps integrate immigrants into our society. Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) is a good example of why giving undocumented children access to public education is so important—thousands of DACA recipients serve our communities as educators and health care workers. Conversely, reversing the Plyler decision would leave large numbers of children with nowhere to go during the day—in turn, exacerbating concerns about child labor, exploitation, and safety.

Over the last 40 years, more than 4.8 million undocumented children have benefited from the Plyler decision. Our nation has too, and it is documented in a report from FWD.us, [The Power of Plyler](#). Specifically, providing access to a free public K-12 education has:

- Generated \$633 billion in state and local tax revenues above and beyond education costs
- Increased our nation's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) by nearly \$3 trillion
- Prevented 730,000 U.S. citizen children from falling into poverty
- Strengthened the U.S. workforce by allowing more than 350,000 people to work in jobs typically requiring some college education
- Averted nearly \$30 billion in health care costs by reducing the rates of disability, depression, infant mortality, and obesity

According to the same report, reversing the Plyler decision would trigger widespread economic pain, disrupt the workforce, and dramatically raise the cost of health care that is already unaffordable for millions of Americans.

Free K-12 public education is transformative. Instead of limiting access to it, Congress should focus on ensuring that America's educators have the resources necessary to give all our children the free public education they deserve.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Kimberly Johnson Trinca', written in a cursive style.

Kimberly Johnson Trinca
Director of Government Relations
National Education Association