

Dignity Act of 2025

Selected Summary of Higher Education-Relevant Provisions

Introduced on July 15, 2025 by Rep. Maria Elvira Salazar (R-FL) and Rep. Veronica Escobar (D-TX), and now backed by [dozens of bipartisan co-sponsors](#), the [Dignity Act of 2025](#) (H.R. 4393) is a bipartisan effort to update key aspects of the US immigration system. A previous version of this bill was introduced in 2023. This two-pager focuses on the bill [provisions most relevant to higher education](#), including reforms and policy changes affecting international students and recent graduates, employment-based green card pathways, and permanent protections for Dreamers, while briefly summarizing other elements that could impact non-citizen students, scholars, staff, and campus communities.

For a fuller summary of the bill, see the National Immigration Forum's [section-by-section summary](#).

International Students and Recent Graduates

The bill would impact international students through provisions that:

- **Expand Dual Intent for F-1 Students**

The bill would remove the requirement that applicants for F-1 student visas demonstrate that they have no intent to remain permanently in the United States after completing their studies.

Allowing “dual intent” would make it easier for international students to pursue education in the U.S. while also exploring long-term employment opportunities without risking their visa status. This change would align the student visa program more closely with workforce needs and reduce uncertainty for students considering careers in the United States.

- **Clarify O-1 Eligibility for STEM and Healthcare PhD Graduates**

The bill would expand eligibility for the O-1 visa (reserved for individuals who demonstrate extraordinary ability or achievement) to include STEM PhD graduates from U.S. universities entering sectors facing workforce shortages, such as healthcare and medical fields.

This provision could significantly improve retention of highly educated international graduates by providing a clearer pathway to long-term employment authorization in the United States.

- **Apply FICA Taxes to All Students on OPT**

The legislation would subject wages earned through Optional Practical Training (OPT) to Social Security and Medicare (FICA) taxes.

The current law exempts international students from FICA taxes during their first five years in the United States. Applying these taxes to OPT wages is intended to address concerns that employers may receive a financial advantage when hiring international students.

Employment-Based Green Card Reforms

The bill aims to reduce employment-based green card backlogs through provisions that:

- **Exclude spouses and children** from counting toward the annual employment-based green card cap, increasing the number of available green cards.
- **Raise the per-country cap** on employment-based green cards from 7% to 15%.
- **Provide Documented Dreamers** who have maintained lawful presence in the US for at least 10 cumulative years with an opportunity to obtain lawful permanent resident (LPR) status.
- Create an optional **\$20,000 premium processing pathway** for individuals who have waited at least 10 years for a green card.

Permanent Legal Status for Dreamers

The bill would create a **“conditional permanent resident” status for Dreamers and DACA holders**, valid for up to 10 years. This status would protect eligible individuals from deportation, allow them to work legally in the US, and permit them to travel outside the country.

To qualify, applicants would need to have entered the United States at age 18 or younger, lived continuously in the country since January 1, 2021, passed a background check, and either graduated from high school, obtained a GED, or been admitted to or enrolled in school. Eligible Dreamers could later remove the conditional basis of their status and become **lawful permanent residents** if they meet additional education, military service, or work requirements.

The bill would also allow the Department of Homeland Security to grant **discretionary relief to undocumented spouses and children of US citizens** to prevent family separation.

Immigration System Efficiency Improvements

The bill proposes administrative improvements to reduce delays and improve coordination across federal agencies, including provisions that:

- **Provide additional funding** for US Citizenship and Immigration Services, the State Department’s Bureau of Consular Affairs, and the Department of Labor’s Office of Foreign Labor Certification to improve visa processing.
- **Establish an Immigration Agency Coordinator** to improve coordination and data sharing among immigration agencies.
- **Protect sensitive locations**, such as schools, medical facilities, and places of worship by limiting immigration enforcement actions absent prior approval or exigent circumstances.

