

## **Our Faith Calls on Us to Stand with Immigrant Youth**

Our faith has taught and called us to welcome the stranger, stand with the vulnerable, and love our neighbor. Now, as women and men religious, we are proud to demonstrate these values in our daily life and service as Sisters and Brothers of Immigrants. It is because of these values that we are deeply disturbed by recent anti-immigrant sentiment espoused by our national leaders. It sends an unwelcoming and mean-spirited message of exclusion by turning our backs on immigrants who are our valued community members.

The current administration is considering terminating the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program, which would put the nearly 800,000 young people, whom the program allows to work and live legally in the United States, at immediate risk of deportation. Ten states threatened to sue President Trump if he did not terminate the DACA program by September 5th. Despite President Trump's prior statements that he supports these dreamers, the administration has signaled that they may not defend the program in court and could dismantle the program in light of these legal challenges.

DACA has allowed thousands to pursue their dreams, live without fear of deportation in the country they call home, and invest in their future and in the future of our country. Ending DACA would be morally reprehensible, denying hundreds of thousands of young people the chance to integrate and thrive. Our immigrant brothers and sisters deserve dignity, welcome, and the opportunity to flourish.

We call upon President Trump to continue the support of DACA, since doing otherwise runs counter to our beliefs as people of faith. We ask the President and the Congress to support and work for legislative changes to the immigration law. We ask for support and action on the bipartisan bills introduced in Congress: the Dream Act of 2017 (S. 1615), the Dream Act of 2017 (HR 3440) and the American Hope Act of 2017 (H.R. 3591). These bills will allow DACA eligible persons to get out of presidential discretion /executive order status and under the immigration law with full protection from deportation and providing a path to permanent resident status. It is time to stop circling the airfield in the DACA program and allow those onboard to land and be full participants in society.

Our faith calls on us to show mercy and hospitality to the stranger. We are called to welcome them with dignity, respect, and love. As Americans, we live in a country built in large part by the hard work, dreams, and determination of generations of immigrants -- many of whom were our ancestors. Sadly, it seems that our legislators have forgotten these lessons and have acted without compassion.

The young people who would be targeted for deportation without DACA are part of our country's future. They are already on their way to being the next generation of doctors, teachers, lawyers, business owners, craftsmen, caregivers, and musicians. To take away their futures, to discount the nearly 800,000 youth, whom DACA has protected for multiple years, is simply wrong. And it continues to stoke a climate of fear, rather than cultivating compassion, truth, and understanding.

We have a moral obligation to welcome the immigrant, uphold the innate dignity of all people, and affirm our nation's greatest value of creating brighter futures for all of us. Immigrant youth are no different from our own ancestors who came to this country searching for the same chance at a better life.

We join faith communities across traditions, who have demonstrated an unwavering commitment to immigrant youth and their families, writing letters in support of the DACA program, and calling on elected officials to champion policies that would create a path to citizenship for undocumented individuals in the United States. We need our elected leaders to protect DACA and support legislation that would provide a permanent solution for young people and their families to remain in the country they call home.

That is the right thing, and the American thing, to do.

Sisters and Brothers of Immigrants, Inc., Chicago, IL 60641

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