



**Department of Migration and Refugee Services  
Office of Migration Policy & Public Affairs**

**Background on Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals  
February 2018**

*Every stranger who knocks at our door is an opportunity for an encounter with Jesus Christ, who identifies with the welcomed and rejected strangers of every age (Matthew 25:35-43). The Lord entrusts to the Church's motherly love every person forced to leave their homeland in search of a better future. This solidarity must be concretely expressed at every stage of the migratory experience – from departure through journey to arrival and return. This is a great responsibility, which the Church intends to share with all believers and men and women of good will.*

-- Pope Francis, *Message for the 104<sup>th</sup> World Day of Migrants and Refugees*, 2018

**BACKGROUND:**

What is DACA?

On June 15, 2012, the Secretary of Homeland Security announced via a memorandum that certain individuals who came to the United States as children and met several guidelines could request consideration for deferred action through the newly initiated Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program. DACA was patterned after the DREAM Act, bipartisan legislation that was initiated more than a decade ago but has not become law. The purpose of DACA was to utilize prosecutorial discretion to provide undocumented persons who were brought to the United States when they were children with temporary relief from deportation (deferred action) and work authorization. DACA recipients also have the ability to apply for advance parole (permission to temporarily leave and re-enter the U.S.). The status expires after two years, subject to renewal.

Why is a legislative solution needed?

The Administration ended DACA on September 5<sup>th</sup>, allowing one-time renewal for those whose status was set to expire between September 5<sup>th</sup> and March 5, 2018. While this termination is now the subject of litigation and a nationwide preliminary injunction, this injunction or halt, is currently only partial and temporary. Congress, however, could permanently protect Dreamers who are contributing to our nation – and provide them with a path to citizenship – through legislation.

Who are Dreamers?

Dreamers exemplify the extraordinary contributions that immigrants can provide to our nation. These young people are contributors to our economy, veterans of our military, academic standouts in our universities, and leaders in our parishes. Dreamers are woven into the fabric of our country and of our Church, and are, by every social and human measure, American youth.

## **USCCB POSITION:**

As Catholics, we believe that the dignity of every human being, particularly that of our children and youth, must be protected. The Catholic Bishops have long supported Dreamers and continue to do so. As Bishop Joe S. Vásquez of Austin, Texas, Chairman of the Committee on Migration (USCCB/COM), recently [stated](#): “As a nation, we have a moral and humanitarian obligation to Dreamers. These young people have steadfastly worked to improve themselves and our country and attempted in good faith to comply with the law as it stood. Their futures hang in the balance. We stand ready to work with the President and with Congress in the coming days to help fashion a just solution that meets their needs, ensures our nation’s safety and security, and sets the stage for the larger debate on immigration reform that is so urgently and desperately needed.”

## **ACTION REQUESTED:**

We ask you to engage with your elected officials to voice your support for these young people and call on your members of Congress to find a bipartisan legislative solution to protect Dreamers. In doing so, please urge them to:

- **Find a Bipartisan Solution to Protect Dreamers.** The approximately 1.8 million Dreamers living in our country were brought to the United States as young people. They worship with us in our churches and synagogues, serve in our military, contribute to our economy, and add their many talents to American society.
- **Provide a Path to Citizenship.** Dreamers know America as their only home and should not be denied the opportunity to obtain U.S. citizenship and participate fully in civic life.
- **Recognize the Sanctity of Families.** Family immigration is the foundation of our country and of our Church. Pope Francis states, “the family unit, the family is the foundation of co-existence and a remedy against social fragmentation.” We steadfastly know that families are what holds America together. We ask you to reject legislation that threatens family-based immigration.
- **Recognize the Right of Nations to Control Their Borders.** While Catholic social teaching on migration recognizes and respects the sovereignty of each nation to regulate its borders, this right must be balanced with the right of vulnerable migrants, such as asylum seekers and victims of human trafficking, to access protection. Border security should be proportional and justly implemented.
- **Maintain Protections for Unaccompanied Children.** A solution for Dreamers cannot be at the expense of other immigrant children. Such a tradeoff would be heartless and untenable. We ask that you maintain existing protections for unaccompanied children which help prevent trafficking and abuse and ensure their access to adequate care.