



Department of Migration and Refugee Services Office of Migration and Refugees Services

Background on Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals January 2020

“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).”

– Pope Francis, 104th World Day of Migrants and Refugees

What is DACA?

In 2012, the Department of Homeland Security initiated the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program for certain undocumented individuals who came to the United States as children and met several criteria. As of June 2019, there were approximately 660,880 DACA recipients. DACA was modeled 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. The status expires after two years, subject to renewal.

Why Should We Protect DACA Youth?

DACA holders exemplify the extraordinary contributions that immigrants can provide to our nation. These young people have grown up in our country, some even choosing to put their lives on the line to serve in our armed forces. These educated, tax-paying individuals are a valuable part of our work force and our communities.

What is the Current State of DACA?

The Trump Administration announced termination of the DACA program on September 5, 2017, allowing a one-time renewal for those whose status was set to expire between September 5th and March 5, 2018. The termination has been the subject of litigation and multiple nationwide preliminary injunctions. The injunctions did not allow new DACA applicants to apply for the program and create continued uncertainty for those enrolled in the program. Most recently, on November 12, 2019, the Supreme Court heard arguments relating to the legality of DACA. It is likely that the Supreme Court will issue its opinion in the spring or early summer of 2020. The Supreme Court can either uphold the program or can allow the termination of DACA to occur.

The Importance of a Legislative Solution

While the U.S. Supreme Court deliberates the future of DACA and of DACA youth, it is vital that we encourage Congress to act to provide Dreamers with a path to citizenship. The House passed H.R. 6 on June 4, 2019, which provides critical permanent legal protection to DACA recipients and other populations in need of protection. The USCCB's Committee on Migration Chairman has voiced support for the bill numerous times: issuing a March 15, 2019 statement endorsing H.R. 6, sending a letter to each Member of the U.S. House of Representatives in support of the bill.

Although the House has acted on legislation that would support this population, no similar level of action has occurred in the Senate. If the Supreme Court ends the DACA program and there is no legislation that has passed the Senate and the House, DACA youth will face an uncertain future and maybe even deportation and family separation. For this reason, it is imperative that we turn our attention to the Senate

and urge them to support a legislative solution for Dreamers that provides a path to citizenship, such as S.874, the Dream Act of 2019.

ACTION REQUESTED:

We ask you to engage with your elected officials to voice your support for these young people and call your Senators to find a bipartisan legislative solution during this Congressional session to protect Dreamers that provides a path to citizenship, such as S.874, the Dream Act of 2019.