



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

Background on Dreamers and Temporary Protected Status February 2019

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).

BACKGROUND:

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 guidelines. 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. The status expires after two years, subject to renewal.

Why is a legislative solution needed?

The 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. While this termination is now the subject of litigation and multiple nationwide preliminary injunctions, the injunctions or halts, are currently only partial and temporary. The injunctions do not allow new DACA applicants to apply for the program and create continued uncertainty for those enrolled in the program. 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 are young people who include DACA recipients, as well as other undocumented individuals of a similar age group who were brought to the United States by their parents as children. They 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.

What is Temporary Protected Status (TPS)?

TPS was established by Congress through the Immigration Act of 1990. TPS is intended to protect foreign nationals in the United States from being returned to their home countries if the home country became unsafe to return to during the time in which the individuals were in the U.S.

Why is a legislative solution needed?

The Administration has terminated the TPS designations for many countries, including Haiti, Honduras, Nicaragua, and El Salvador. While subject to litigation, over 300,000 TPS holders now face uncertainty and possible family separation. Congress has the power to legislate permanent legal status for TPS holders, which would assist both TPS holders and, indirectly, their over 273,000 U.S. citizen children.

Who are TPS holders?

TPS recipients have strong ties to the U.S. – some have been here for nearly 20 years; they have careers, home mortgages, and family members with U.S. citizenship. TPS recipients are seeking to live safe and productive lives in the U.S. at a time when they cannot do so in their home countries.

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 104th World Day of Migrants and Refugees, 2018

USCCB POSITION:

As Catholics, we believe that the dignity of every human being, particularly that of youth and families, must be protected. The Catholic Bishops have long supported Dreamers and TPS holders, and they continue to do so. As Bishop Joe S. Vásquez of Austin, Texas, Chairman of the Committee on Migration, 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.” Bishop Vásquez has similarly [noted](#): “We believe our nation has a moral responsibility to provide continued temporary protection until TPS holders’ return and reintegration can be safely accomplished. TPS recipients are an integral part of the fabric of our communities.”

ACTION REQUESTED:

We ask you to engage with your federal lawmakers to voice your support for these young people and hardworking families. Call on your members of Congress to find a bipartisan legislative solution to protect Dreamers and TPS holders. In doing so, please urge them to:

- **Find a Bipartisan Solution to Protect Dreamers that Offers a Path to Citizenship.** The approximately 1.8 million Dreamers living in our country were brought to the U.S. as young people. They worship with us in our churches and synagogues, serve in our military, contribute to our economy, and add contribute their talents to society. 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.
- **Find a Permanent Legal Solution for TPS Holders.** Congressional lawmakers need to work in a bipartisan manner to address long-term TPS recipients. These individuals have personal equities that are closely associated with U.S. interests, such as U.S. citizen children, businesses, careers, and home mortgages.
- **Maintain Protections for Unaccompanied Children and Asylum Seekers.** A solution for Dreamers and TPS holders cannot be at the expense of other immigrant children and families. Such a tradeoff would be heartless and untenable. We ask that you reject any legislation that threatens existing protections for unaccompanied children and asylum seekers, as these protections help prevent trafficking and abuse and ensure their access to adequate care and due process.