

Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) Talking Points to Congress to Protect Dreamers

Ask:

We urge Congress to pass bipartisan legislation as soon as possible that will include all the protections currently provided under DACA and allow the individuals, often referred to as Dreamers, covered by this policy to continue contributing to our society and economy by working, serving in the military or attending college.

Background:

On September 5, President Trump announced that his administration would terminate the DACA program as of March 5, 2018, unless Congress passed legislation before that time to provide a statutory basis for the initiative. The days since have been filled with daily stories about the fate of DACA, the extraordinary accomplishments of some of the individuals who are registered in the program, and promises and commitments by members of both parties to address the issue before the president's deadline.

Just how this will be accomplished is unclear and, since many college and university leaders feel strongly about this issue, we want to ask your help in convincing Congress to take prompt action.

Issue:

Initiated in June 2012, DACA addresses the uncertain status of thousands of young people brought to this country as infants or children by granting eligible recipients temporary permission to stay in the United States and obtain work permits.

To qualify for DACA, applicants must pass a multifaceted and rigorous test, including the requirement to have arrived in the United States before reaching age 16, resided here continuously since 2012, be enrolled in or completed high school, not been convicted of a crime, and not present a threat to national security or public safety. Today, about 800,000 young people have DACA status, and roughly 350,000 of them are enrolled in college.

These young people grew up in the United States. They consider themselves American, just like their classmates, friends and neighbors, and in most ways they are. Unfortunately, before DACA they were unable to work legally and lived a life in the shadows.

Now, these bright and talented young people are working, studying at colleges and universities, or enlisting in the armed services. Because they now have work permits, many are already making contributions to our society and our economy. They are paying taxes and buying cars, homes and consumer goods, all of which generates economic activity and increases tax revenue for federal, state and local governments. They are ineligible for federal means-tested welfare benefits, Pell Grants and federal student loans, as well as Obamacare tax subsidies.

Public polling and policy analysis support a legislative fix. A Sept. 24-26 Fox News poll found that 83 percent of Americans support some pathway to citizenship for these individuals. A Sept. 18-21 Washington Post- ABC News poll found that more than two-thirds of adults — 69 percent — support allowing these individuals to stay in the United States if they had arrived as a child, had completed high school or served in the military and had not committed a serious crime.

According to a recent study by the conservative CATO Institute, a repeal or rollback of DACA would harm the economy and reduce tax revenue. CATO also estimates that deporting those with DACA status would cost over \$60 billion in lost tax revenue and result in a \$280 billion reduction in economic growth over the next decade.

Unfortunately, many of these young people live in fear and uncertainty now that the administration has announced plans to rescind DACA. Guidance from the Department of Homeland Security does not clarify if students can travel outside the United States for study abroad programs, international conferences or for family emergencies. Uncertainty regarding work permits after March 5 means many of our DACA students are struggling to plan for college costs past the spring 2018 semester.

In the 16 years since the Dream Act was first introduced, a number of bills have been introduced in Congress to address the uncertain status of these individuals, including various versions of the Dream Act, which the higher education community has long supported. Again, we urge Congress to promptly pass bipartisan legislation that includes all the protections currently provided under DACA.