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Graham, Durbin Announce Bipartisan Bridge Act To Protect Young Individuals From Deportation

WASHINGTON – U.S. Senators Lindsey Graham (R-SC) and Dick Durbin (D-IL) today announced they are introducing bipartisan legislation to protect young undocumented individuals should the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program be discontinued. U.S. Senators Lisa Murkowski (R-AK), Dianne Feinstein (D-CA), and Jeff Flake (R-AZ) are original cosponsors of the bill.

Like DACA, the Bar Removal of Individuals who Dream and Grow our Economy (BRIDGE) Act would provide temporary relief from deportation and work authorization to young undocumented individuals who were brought to the United States as children.

“It’s my firm belief most Americans want to fix a broken immigration system in a humane manner,” said Graham. **“In my view, the DACA Executive Order issued by President Obama was unconstitutional and President-elect Trump would be right to repeal it. However, I do not believe we should pull the rug out and push these young men and women -- who came out of the shadows and registered with the federal government -- back into the darkness. Our legislation continues to provide legal status to them for three years as Congress seeks a permanent solution. These young people have much to offer the country and we stand to benefit from the many contributions they will make to America. I’m confident that if President-elect Trump were to support this measure we can repeal the unconstitutional Executive Order and Congress will provide temporary legal status through the proper constitutional process.”**

“DREAMers have so much to contribute to this country, their country, and they’ve demonstrated their commitment to the United States in countless ways – by opening businesses, becoming doctors and teachers, and serving in uniform,” said Senator Durbin. **“That’s why I’m proud to work with Senator Graham to ensure that DREAMers are protected from deportation until we are able to provide a permanent fix for our broken immigration system. These kids are Americans at heart and deserve to remain in the only country they call home.”**

“In the highly contentious world of immigration policy, one of the least controversial propositions is that the children of undocumented individuals, who were brought to the United States by their parents and were educated here, should have the opportunity to pursue their dreams in America,” said Senator Murkowski. **“Along with members of Alaska’s faith community, I share the strong moral conviction that the Dreamers should be free from fear of deportation. The introduction of this measure is timed to remind the Dreamers that there are people in Congress who have their backs.”**

“More than 350,000 Dreamers live, work and are educated in California—nearly half the young people nationwide who have been admitted to the deferred action program. Giving these young people an opportunity to go to college, pursue careers and give back to their communities has been tremendously beneficial for my state,” said Senator Feinstein. **“We have a moral obligation to do all we can to shield them from deportation and keep their families together.”**

“Congress needs to pass legislation to lawfully ensure that children who were brought here by their parents, through no fault of their own, are able to stay and finish their education and continue to contribute to society,” said Senator Flake.

Key points of the BRIDGE Act:

- A current DACA recipient would receive provisional protected status until the expiration date of his or her DACA status and could apply for provisional protected presence prior to this expiration.
- An individual who is not a DACA recipient but who is eligible for DACA could also apply for provisional protected presence.
- Applicants would be required to pay a reasonable fee, be subject to criminal background checks, and meet a number of eligibility criteria indicating that they came to the United States as minors, grew up in this country, have pursued an education, have not committed any serious crimes, and do not pose a threat to our country.
- An individual’s provisional protected presence and employment authorization would be subject to revocation by DHS if the individual no longer met the eligibility criteria.
- The BRIDGE Act would provide provisional protected presence and employment authorization for three years after the date of enactment of the legislation

Find out more about the BRIDGE Act below.

The BRIDGE Act

The BRIDGE (Bar Removal of Individuals who Dream and Grow our Economy) Act would provide temporary relief from deportation and employment authorization to individuals who are eligible for the Department of Homeland Security's Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals ("DACA") program.

DACA provides temporary protection from removal and work authorization to young students and veterans who grew up in the United States if they register with the government, pay a fee, and pass a criminal background check. More than 740,000 young people have received DACA. Temporary protection under the BRIDGE Act would ensure that these young people can continue to work and study and be protected from deportation while Congress debates broader legislation to fix our broken immigration system.

The BRIDGE Act would provide "provisional protected presence" and employment authorization to DACA-eligible individuals. A current DACA recipient would receive provisional protected presence until the expiration date of his or her DACA status and could apply for provisional protected presence prior to that expiration. An individual who is not a DACA recipient but who is eligible for DACA could also apply for provisional protected presence.

Applicants would be required to pay a reasonable fee, undergo criminal background checks, and meet a number of eligibility criteria indicating that they came to the United States as minors, grew up in this country, have pursued an education, have not committed any serious crimes, and do not pose a threat to our country.

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