



September 8, 2017

The U.S. Commission on Civil Rights Condemns Ending of Undocumented Youth Program

The U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, by majority vote, disapproves of President Donald J. Trump's decision to end the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program. The decision is a step backward for our country, which draws its strength from the valuable social and economic contributions from all members of society.

The DACA program provided temporary relief from deportation and work permits to many young undocumented immigrants known as "DREAMers"¹ who were brought to the U.S. as children and are considered Americans in every way, except on paper. Over 800,000² DREAMers have benefited from the DACA program, which has allowed them to attend college, start businesses, and serve and protect our country. Repealing the program would have a significant economic impact on the nation. Approximately 700,000 jobs would be removed from the economy as well as hundreds of billions of dollars in lost tax revenue and economic growth over the next decade.³ If the administration pursues deportation of these immigrants, the costs would run in the billions of dollars.⁴

The decision is a tremendous blow to the personal dreams and ambitions that DREAMers have been working toward since the DACA program began in 2012. They now face a reality where they are at risk of being exploited in the workplace and deported and prevented from fully contributing to and supporting their families, communities, and country.

¹ A term derived from the Development, Relief, and Education for Alien Minors Act (DREAM Act), which provided a pathway to citizenship for undocumented youth high school graduates or GED recipients by obtaining a college degree or serving in the military. The DREAM Act has been introduced on several occasions with bipartisan support but has never been passed. There is a large, but not complete, overlap of eligible beneficiaries under the DACA program and the DREAM Act.

² U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, Number of Form I-821D, Consideration of Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals, by Fiscal Year, Quarter, Intake, Biometrics and Case Status Fiscal Year 2012-2017 (March 31 2017), https://www.uscis.gov/sites/default/files/USCIS/Resources/Reports%20and%20Studies/Immigration%20Forms%20Data/All%20Form%20Types/DACA/daca_performancedata_fy2017_qtr2.pdf.

³ See Nicole Prchal Svaljenka & Tom Jawetz, Center for American Progress, A New Threat to DACA Could Cost States Billions of Dollars (July 21, 2017), <https://www.americanprogress.org/issues/immigration/news/2017/07/21/436419/new-threat-daca-cost-states-billions-dollars/> (ending DACA would result in \$460.3 billion reduction in GDP over ten years); Ike Brannon & Logan Albright, CATO Institute, The Economic and Fiscal Impact of Repealing DACA (Jan. 18, 2017), <https://www.cato.org/blog/economic-fiscal-impact-repealing-daca> (\$280 billion reduction in economic growth over ten years).

⁴ Brannon & Albright, *supra* (deportation costs would be \$7.5 billion).

For decades, the Commission and its state advisory committees have investigated and reported on the often negative civil rights implications of our nation's immigration laws and policies.⁵ In addition, ending the program after participants have relied to their now serious detriment on its promises, raises serious access to justice concerns. Although the administration has stated “absent a law enforcement interest . . . the [Department of Homeland Security] will generally not take actions to remove active DACA recipients,”⁶ DACA recipients may still have their status revoked, and after their status expires, can be subject to deportation.⁷ Undocumented people were encouraged to come forward under DACA and are now vulnerable because they took action to protect themselves and their families. The Commission strongly urges Congress to pass legislation⁸ to protect DACA beneficiaries and to work on a compassionate and comprehensive modernization of our immigration system.

Chair Catherine E. Lhamon stated: “Rending America’s social fabric to target children solely on the basis of their parents’ decisions offends the American values embodied in the DREAMers and their principled contributions to our nation.”

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The U.S. Commission on Civil Rights is an independent, bipartisan agency charged with advising the President and Congress on civil rights matters and issuing an annual federal civil rights enforcement report. For information about the Commission, please visit <http://www.usccr.gov> and follow us on [Twitter](#) and [Facebook](#).

⁵ See USCCR, U.S. Commission on Civil Rights Commends President Obama on Issuance of Immigration Accountability Executive Action (Nov. 21, 2014), http://www.usccr.gov/press/2014/Immigration_letter.pdf (summarizing history of USCCR immigration investigations).

⁶ Press Release, The White House, President Donald J. Trump Restores Responsibility and the Rule of Law to Immigration (Sept. 5, 2017), <https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2017/09/05/president-donald-j-trump-restores-responsibility-and-rule-law>.

⁷ Mark Curnutte, *ICE Releases Mom who was Detained Despite Legal Status*, USA Today (Aug. 24, 2017), <https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/nation-now/2017/08/24/advocate-ice-says-release-kentucky-mom-who-has-legal-status/599185001/> (mother with DACA status arrested and detained); Nicole Chavez & Rosa Flores, *ICE Releases Seattle ‘Dreamer’ Daniel Ramirez Medina*, CNN (Mar. 29, 2017), <http://www.cnn.com/2017/03/29/us/daniel-ramirez-dreamer-released/index.html> (DACA recipient held in detention six weeks).

⁸ Bipartisan bills have already been introduced. See H.R. 496, 115th Cong. (1st Sess. 2017); S. 1615, 115th Cong. (1st Sess. 2017).