



TALKING POINTS - January 2020

DEFERRED ACTION FOR CHILDHOOD ARRIVALS (DACA)



What is our message to Congress?

Support legislation in the Senate, such as S.874, the Dream Act of 2019, which will protect individuals benefitting from the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program, known as Dreamers, by providing a path to citizenship.

Who are the DACA recipients and how many are there?

DACA recipients (sometimes called Dreamers) are undocumented individuals who were brought to the U.S. as children by their parents. Under the DACA program started in 2012, about 660,880 undocumented applied for temporary relief from deportation and for the right to work.

If the Dreamers are in the U.S. illegally, why should we protect them?

DACA holders essentially grew up in the U.S. and many of them remember little, if anything, about where they were born. They are American in everything but immigration status. These young people attend colleges and universities with our own children or siblings, are required to pay taxes, serve honorably in our nation's armed services and reserves, and worship with us in our parishes.

DACA recipients are among the most "extremely vetted" immigrants in the United States. The government knows they have not previously committed any felonies, knows where they live and work, how much they pay in taxes, and know if they leave the country and return. DACA recipients contribute to the economy and pay for DACA.

Many Americans are second or third generation immigrants, and many of us are first generation immigrants just like DACA recipients. For many Americans, our last name is a reminder of our immigrant and ethnic heritage.

What is the status of legislation on DACA?

On June 4, 2019, the House of Representatives passed HR 6, which provides critical permanent legal protection to DACA recipients and other populations in need of protection. If the Supreme Court ends the DACA program later this year and there is no legislation that has passed Congress, DACA youth will face an uncertain future and maybe even deportation and family separation. It is thus imperative that the Senate finds a bipartisan legislative solution to protect DACA recipients that provides a path to citizenship, such as S.874, the Dream Act of 2019.

What does the Church and Catholic teaching say about Dreamers?

The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops has long supported Dreamers, and we continue to urge Congress to work with all deliberate speed towards a bipartisan legislative solution that includes a path to citizenship for these youth.

As Catholics, we are taught to care for the foreigner: "For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, a stranger and you welcomed me." (Mt 25:35). These are our obligations as a Christian people – to care for our neighbor. Let's remember and live by the teaching in Leviticus 19:34: *The foreigner living with you must be treated as one of your native born. Love them as yourself, for you were foreigners in Egypt.*