

EVANGELICAL IMMIGRATION table.

September 13, 2023

Dear Members of Congress,

As evangelical leaders across the United States, we are deeply concerned with the uncertainty facing “Dreamers” living in the United States, including about 600,000 individuals who currently benefit from the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) policy. We respectfully urge you to act quickly to provide a permanent legislative solution for Dreamers.

This issue is central to our Christian faith, as we seek to love our neighbors and be a voice for those whose voices go unheard. In fact, a recent survey finds that four out of five U.S. evangelicals want Republicans and Democrats to work together on a series of immigration reforms that would include creating a pathway to citizenship for immigrants brought to the U.S. as children, along with improvements to border security and reforms to ensure a legal, reliable agricultural workforce. In other words, your evangelical Christian constituents want you to contribute to legislative solutions.

Today, a federal judge in Texas once again ruled against the DACA policy, reaffirming a previous ruling that found fault with the underlying legal basis of this program which, since 2012, has allowed hundreds of thousands of young immigrants to become lawfully present and authorized to work in the United States. We are writing to implore you to please address this situation legislatively before further court decisions precipitate an even greater crisis.

The roughly 600,000 individuals within the United States who currently benefit from DACA – each of whom arrived in the United States as a child fifteen or more years ago, has passed background checks and has paid application fees as requested by our government – are in most cases now adults who rely upon their ability to work lawfully to contribute to our economy and provide for their families, including, in many cases, their U.S.-born children.

While the judicial decision this week temporarily sustains the ability of these Dreamers to renew their DACA protections and employment authorization, it brings us closer to a foreseeable crisis on the near horizon: the 5th Circuit Court of Appeals, which has already largely affirmed a previous decision by the court finding that DACA was created illegally, will very likely re-affirm that decision. And then the U.S. Supreme Court, which in 2016 ruled against the legality of a similar deferred action policy, will take up the case and is likely to conclude that DACA was created unlawfully. This presumably will



mean withdrawing employment authorization from hundreds of thousands of people, whose lives will be thrown into crisis, with negative ripple effects for their families, employers, churches and communities.

Another set of Dreamers has already been adversely affected by these court decisions: individuals who meet the qualifications for the DACA program but whose applications had not been submitted or adjudicated prior to the initial judicial ruling against the DACA program in the summer of 2021 have been barred from accessing the program. This includes many individuals who were too young to meet the DACA program's requirement that applicants must generally be at least fifteen years old to apply. Many others who were brought to the United States at a very young age are ineligible for DACA because they arrived after June 2007.

These dynamics are not theoretical for American evangelicals, many of whom personally know Dreamers who are members of and leaders within our churches, students on our college and seminary campuses and colleagues in our ministries.

As we have urged you repeatedly in the past, we respectfully implore you to pass legislation quickly before further court decisions exacerbate the situation. We urge you to make a permanent legislative solution for Dreamers a reality.

Sincerely,

Evangelical Immigration Table Organizations:

Council for Christian Colleges and Universities
Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention
Faith and Community Empowerment
National Association of Evangelicals
National Latino Evangelical Coalition
The Wesleyan Church
World Relief