

EVANGELICAL IMMIGRATION table.

May 7, 2024

Dear Members of the U.S. Senate Judiciary Committee:

We are writing to encourage you to find a workable solution for Dreamers, the young undocumented immigrants in our country who were brought here as children, many of whom are contributing greatly to our society. We thank you for holding tomorrow's hearing, *Dream Deferred: The Urgent Need to Protect Immigrant Youth*, and hope it is the start of bipartisan negotiations to move forward on a solution.

More than two million Dreamers have grown up in our communities, been educated in our schools, and are now studying, working or defending our country as service members. Approximately 530,000 of these Dreamers are currently protected by the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program, but we have concerns that the program is both a temporary and imperfect tool to protect Dreamers. Many eligible Dreamers are being blocked from applying for DACA protection because the program is in legal limbo. This issue begs for a permanent legislative solution and demands bipartisan leadership on Capitol Hill.

Dreamers are leading in our churches and our communities. They are studying in our universities and creating jobs for American workers. They are paying taxes. These young people have shown through their great determination and fortitude that our nation is better off because of their presence. We hope that you will work to find solutions that allow these young people to stay in our country long term and continue to be a blessing to our communities.

Dreamers, who stepped forward in good faith in large numbers when the U.S. government allowed them to do so, are not threats to the United States. By enrolling in DACA, they already have submitted to screening for criminal activity and potential threats to national security. There are also Dreamers who would have been eligible for DACA but were too young – under age 15 – to enroll before the program stopped accepting new applications in 2017. They too should be eligible to stay in this country.

We also affirm the urgent need for other immigration policy reforms, including solutions at the U.S.-Mexico border. However, a lack of movement in one area does not have to prevent movement in another. Congress could address multiple challenges at once – and evangelical Christians want them to do so. A recent study by [Lifeway Research](#) found that fully 80% of evangelical Christians would support reforms that would include a pathway to citizenship for Dreamers, improvements to border security and reforms to ensure an adequate number of visas for agricultural workers.



Now is the time for bold leadership. In September 2023, U.S. District Judge Andrew Hanen ruled that DACA is unlawful. While Judge Hanen stayed the effects of that decision on existing DACA beneficiaries, maintaining their protection from deportation and work authorization for the time being, the program faces significant legal challenges and an uncertain future. In light of the court decision, DACA recipients brought to the U.S. as children – most of whom are now adults, many of whom now have U.S.-born children of their own who rely upon them – could eventually lose their work authorization and protection from deportation. Even with DACA still in place, most young Dreamers who graduate from high school do not have access to the program. Today, only one-third of Dreamers enrolled in a college or university have DACA or are DACA-eligible. The rest have lived most of their lives in the U.S. without access to a work permit or protection from deportation. This underscores the need for a legislative solution.

We ask you to work with House leadership and the White House to develop and pass legislation to protect Dreamers. There are bipartisan bills that would provide permanent legislative solutions for Dreamers, including the Dream Act (S. 365) introduced by Senators Lindsey Graham and Dick Durbin. The committee could mark up the Dream Act or use the bill as a starting point for further negotiations. Congress has a responsibility to deal with this issue in a just and humane way.

A solution for Dreamers has been a longstanding priority for the Evangelical Immigration Table, which is a broad coalition of evangelical organizations and leaders advocating for immigration reform consistent with biblical principles. As Christians, we believe that all immigrants are made in the image of God (Genesis 1:27), deserving to be treated with dignity. Throughout the Old and New Testaments, we find God commanding his people to treat foreigners with hospitality. In Leviticus 19:33-34, God reminds the Israelites:

When a foreigner resides among you in your land, do not mistreat them. The foreigner residing among you must be treated as your native-born. Love them as yourself, for you were foreigners in Egypt. I am the Lord your God.

Jesus Himself taught his disciples that by welcoming a “stranger,” we could be welcoming Him (Matthew 25:35). As Americans, we are proud that our country has affirmed the biblical principle of valuing and protecting immigrants while also protecting national security.

We offer our prayers as you and your advisors make this and countless other important decisions. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Evangelical Immigration Table Organizations:

Asian American Christian Collaborative
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