



Dear Conexión Américas Partners,

The White House reported that an announcement on DACA (Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals) will be made on Tuesday, September 5th, 2017.

There are more than 8,300 DACA recipients in Tennessee and many of them are your students.

These are uncertain times for immigrant students, often called Dreamers, who currently benefit from the temporary protection provided by the DACA program.

**We want to share information about resources and supports available to your students who may be feeling overwhelmed and anxious during these times.**

- Conexión Américas is ready to be a resource for students who are seeking information, would like to schedule a legal screening, or want to join events for DACA recipients. Students can reach us by:
  - Emailing [DACA@conexionamericas.org](mailto:DACA@conexionamericas.org)
  - Texting DACA to 313131
  - Calling (615) 320-5152
- We invite DACA students in Middle Tennessee to join us for a **DACA Community Gathering** on September 10th from 3pm-5pm at Conexión Américas, located at Casa Azafrán at 2195 Nolensville Pike, Nashville TN 37209. Participants will receive free lunch and will hear important information from an immigration attorney and mental health professionals. Yoga and other self-care opportunities will also be available. A flyer is attached. Please feel free to make copies or post via social media.
- Students can access free **mental health resources** from the national organization United We Dream via: <http://defenddaca.com/resources/mental-health-toolkit/>

**Conexión Américas is also ready to be a resource to your institution, faculty and staff:**

- We will host a DACA 101 Webinar for staff and faculty who would like to learn more about the program and how to create a supportive campus and classroom environment for immigrant students. The webinar will be Friday, September 8th from 9am to 10am. Register here: <http://bit.ly/DACA101>
- The attached **policy memorandum** provides additional information on DACA and its current state, along with an overview of legislation introduced in Congress to support Dreamers.
- Don't hesitate to contact us at [DACA@conexionamericas.org](mailto:DACA@conexionamericas.org) if we can be of assistance.



**Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) Policy Memorandum**  
*In response to the pending announcement regarding the status of DACA*  
*Prepared by Conexión Américas on September 1, 2017*

### **Background on DACA**

The Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA)<sup>1</sup> program is an executive order announced by President Obama in 2012. DACA allows certain young people, often referred to as Dreamers, who came to the United States as children to qualify for protection from deportation proceedings and remain in the country. Young people who are approved for DACA receive a social security number to be able to obtain employment and in some states - including Tennessee - can get a driver license. DACA provides protection for two years, and individuals can reapply when close to their expiration date.

Over its five year history, DACA has allowed over 800,000 young people pursue higher education, earn better wages, own homes, start businesses, and more. Out of those that have been approved for DACA, over 700,000 are currently working. Repealing DACA would mean that the United States economy would lose an average of 7,234 workers every week. Without DACA, we would lose over \$460.3 billion from the national GDP over the next decade<sup>2</sup>.

In Tennessee, over 8,300 young people have received DACA. The Migration Policy Institute estimates that another 6,000 young people would be eligible for DACA in Tennessee when they turn 15 years old. Rescinding DACA would mean Tennessee will lose over \$347.3 Million annually in our state GDP<sup>3</sup>.

### **Current State of DACA**

On June 29th, Texas led nine attorney's general - including Tennessee's Herbert Slattery III - in sending a letter to President Trump and Attorney General Jeff Sessions giving Trump a deadline to terminate the DACA program by September 5th, or they would file a lawsuit. It is widely expected that President Trump will terminate the program before September 5th. DACA, as an executive order, can be terminated at any time without the need for congressional approval. DACA was passed as a temporary solution, but provides no long-term path to citizenship. Ending DACA will not fix our broken immigration system, only an act of Congress can do that. In recognition of the threat to DACA, and the short-term nature of the program, legislation has been introduced in Congress to provide a more permanent protection and a pathway to citizenship for young immigrants.

On Friday, September 1st, Tennessee's Attorney General removed his name from the pending lawsuit, instead urging Congress to act on the issue by voting on the bipartisan DREAM Act of 2017. Similarly, Speaker of the House Paul Ryan along with about ten GOP members Congress, have called on President Trump not to end DACA and allow Congress to pursue a permanent solution.

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<sup>1</sup> United States Citizenship and Immigration Services. Consideration of Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA). <https://www.uscis.gov/humanitarian/consideration-deferred-action-childhood-arrivals-daca>

<sup>2</sup> 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 (U.S. Department of Homeland Security, 2017).

<sup>3</sup> Nicole Prchal Svajlenka, Tom Jawetz, and Angie Bautista-Chavez, "A New Threat to DACA Could Cost States Billions of Dollars" (Washington: Center for American Progress, 2017), available at <https://www.americanprogress.org/issues/immigration/news/2017/07/21/436419/new-threat-daca-cost-states-billions-dollars/>



## Legislation Introduced in Congress

As of September 2017, there are four pieces of legislation that have been introduced that could provide support for Dreamers: The DREAM Act of 2017, the BRIDGE Act, the RAC Act, and the American Hope Act of 2017.

### The DREAM Act of 2017

Senators Dick Durbin (D-IL) and Lindsey Graham (R-SC) introduced a bipartisan bill called the DREAM Act of 2017. If passed, it would offer a route to permanent legal status for millions of undocumented immigrant youth. The DREAM Act of 2017 draws on essential requirements of earlier versions of the DREAM Act. The minimum threshold for consideration includes age of arrival, length of time in the United States, and a clean criminal record. The DREAM Act of 2017 proposes a two-tiered process starting with conditional status of eight years. Within this time, if an individual successfully attains at least a two-year postsecondary degree or serves honorably in the military, or is continuously employed conditional status could be removed and they could obtain legal permanent residence.

### The BRIDGE Act (Bar Removal of Individuals who Dream and Grow our Economy)

Senators Dick Durbin (D-IL) and Lindsey Graham (R-SC) introduced bipartisan legislation with the intent to allow young people who had received protection through DACA to receive “provisional protected presence” and work authorization. The requirements for the BRIDGE Act are essentially the same as DACA. However, an approved applicant is only provided provisional protected presence for three years after the enactment of the BRIDGE Act. Those with DACA would be protected until the expiration of their work permits, and would then be eligible to apply for provisional protected presence. The BRIDGE Act would not provide a path to citizenship.

### The RAC Act (Recognizing America’s Children)

Representative Carlos Curbelo (R-Florida) introduced the Recognizing America’s Children act with nine original Republican co-sponsors. The bill would permit young undocumented immigrants who were brought to the U.S. as children and have lived here since at least January 1, 2012, to gain a five-year “conditional permanent resident” status if they pursue vocational or higher education, enlist in the military or are gainfully employed, and meet other requirements. Conditional permanent residency can be extended once for a second period of five years if an individual has been enlisted in the military, has graduated from an institution of higher education, or has been continuously employed. As soon as the conditional permanent residency status is extended, a recipient could apply to become a legal permanent resident.

### The American Hope Act of 2017

*Yet to be introduced by Representative Luis Gutiérrez*

The American Hope Act would allow DACA beneficiaries and other immigrant youth to apply for conditional permanent resident status. After three years, those with conditional permanent resident status can apply to obtain lawful permanent resident status. Time with DACA would count towards in individuals’ three years. The path towards citizenship would be a five-year pathway, but time in conditional permanent resident status would count towards the five years needed to obtain citizenship. To qualify, individuals do not have to meet education or other requirements other than maintaining conditional permanent resident status without leaving the country or committing a deportable offense.