



U.S. Commission on Civil Rights Urges Passage of the Dream Act of 2019

April 12, 2019

The U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, by unanimous vote, welcomes the introduction of the Dream Act of 2019.¹ First introduced nineteen years ago, passage of this bipartisan legislation is long overdue. The Dream Act recognizes that our country is stronger when all its members can make economic and social contributions to their fullest potentials.

The Dream Act would provide the opportunity to earn legal permanent residence and eventual citizenship to “Dreamers,” undocumented immigrants who were brought to the U.S. as children, built their lives and families here, and are considered American in every way except for their immigration status. Our country has already benefited from the creation of hundreds of thousands of jobs and increased economic activity of Dreamers² who have benefited from the federal government’s Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program, which allows them to attend college, serve in the military, and start businesses.³ However, the DACA program only serves as temporary relief from deportation for Dreamers. The current administration has sought to end the program,⁴ and the future of the DACA program remains uncertain.⁵ DACA recipients have relied on the promises of the program at great personal risk, and threats to end the program raise serious access to justice concerns. Without the Dream Act, Dreamers continue to be at risk of being exploited in the workplace, deported, or prevented from fully contributing to and supporting their families, communities, and country.

Since the 1960s the Commission and its state advisory committees have chronicled the civil rights implications of our nation’s immigration laws and policies.⁶ Lawmakers must work to establish compassionate policies and commonsense solutions to allow unauthorized immigrants to continue their contributions to our country without being marginalized and without fear of immediate deportation. The Dream Act is an

¹ Dream Act of 2019, S. 874, 116th Cong. § 1 (2019).

² There is a large, but not complete, overlap of eligible beneficiaries under the DACA program and the DREAM Act.

³ See USCCR, *The U.S. Commission on Civil Rights Condemns Ending of Undocumented Youth Program*, Sept. 8, 2017, <https://www.usccr.gov/press/2017/09-08-DACA.pdf>.

⁴ *Id.*

⁵ Dara Lind, *The Supreme Court isn’t Giving Trump Leverage on a Shutdown DACA Deal*, Vox (Jan. 22, 2019), <https://www.vox.com/policy-and-politics/2019/1/22/18192924/supreme-court-decision-daca-lawsuit> (the Supreme Court has not announced whether it will take up lawsuits challenging the administration’s efforts to end the DACA program).

⁶ See USCCR, *The Mexican American; A Paper Prepared for the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights* (1968); 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).

important first step to much needed comprehensive immigration reform and the Commission strongly urges Congress to finally pass this legislation.

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The U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, established by the Civil Rights Act of 1957, is the only independent, bipartisan agency charged with advising the President and Congress on civil rights and reporting annually on federal civil rights enforcement. Our 51 state Advisory Committees offer a broad perspective on civil rights concerns at state and local levels. The Commission: in our 7th decade, a continuing legacy of influence in civil rights. Please visit www.usccr.gov and follow us on [Twitter](#) and [Facebook](#).