

Major Christian Leaders Plead With the President to Consider Compassion

Recent news reports suggest that President Trump is considering the termination of the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program, which since 2012 has allowed approximately 800,000 young people who came to the United States as children to obtain employment authorization and a reprieve from the threat of deportation.

Earlier this week, World Relief urged President Trump to refrain from rescinding the DACA program, at least until such time as Congress has passed a legislative solution addressing the plight of these individuals. We have further renewed our call upon Congress to expeditiously pass a bill such as the DREAM Act or the BRIDGE Act, both of which have been introduced with bipartisan cosponsors in the current Congress.

Evangelical leaders, many of whom have individuals with DACA within their congregations, have also spoken up in recent days— including the following leaders:

Lynne Hybels, Advocate for Global Engagement, Willow Creek Community Church, South Barrington, Illinois

Our church is deeply invested in serving the immigrant community in the Chicagoland area. We've hosted workshops helping dozens of brave young people to apply for the DACA program. We've witnessed firsthand the hope that the DACA program has brought to individuals who have wanted nothing more than the chance to pursue an education and lead a productive life, just as our own children have done. To end the program now, without action from Congress first, would be devastating—for them and for the communities that benefit from their work, ingenuity and courage.

Erwin McManus, Founder, MOSAIC, Los Angeles, California

The roughly 800,000 people who have benefitted from the DACA program—more of whom live in in my city of Los Angeles than anywhere else in the country—are American in every way except on paper. They are not to be feared but embraced as immigrants who define the American spirit. We are a nation of immigrants. We are a nation defined by openness and inclusion. We are big enough to rise above this challenge and choose the path that elevates the best in all of us.

Dave Gibbons, Founder, Newsong Church, Santa Ana, California

The God we know in the Scriptures lovingly focuses on those who are vulnerable, the hurting and the immigrants. Symbiotic with our love for God is our love for the outsider. I urge our elected officials will not only find a permanent generous solution for “Dreamers,” young people who came or were brought as children to the country, but also for the broader immigrant community, who contribute so much to our country economically, culturally and spiritually.

Rev. Félix Cabrera, Lead Pastor, Iglesia Bautista Central, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, and Co-Founder, Hispanic Baptist Pastors Alliance

To end the DACA program now would be immoral, violating the trust of young immigrants, including those within my congregation and many other Hispanic Southern Baptists throughout the country, who trusted the federal government when it asked them to register and provide their personal information. It would also be economically disastrous, forcing the laying off of hundreds of thousands of trained employees, leaving both their employers and the employees in an incredibly difficult spot. It could trigger a domino effect that harms many citizens (as well as the Dreamers and their families), when those who have lost their jobs would

struggle to pay rent or a mortgage payment, miss car payments, be forced to withdraw from college or graduate school, and have trouble providing basic food and clothing for their families. Rather than taking another step that will exacerbate ethnic and political divisions in our nation, I pray that President Trump and Congressional leaders from both parties will work together to pass legislation to protect Dreamers, and in the process, help to unify our nation.

Thabiti Anyabwile, Pastor, Anacostia River Church, Washington, D.C.

My church family includes a good number of first and second-generation immigrants. They make our church and community stronger, just as immigrants make our nation stronger. Perhaps that's why the Bible instructs us to be sure to take care of the "strangers and sojourners" in our communities, remembering that we too were aliens and strangers at one time. While immigration policy overall is tremendously complex, one particular question—what should happen with individuals who came as children to the country, who have already been granted work authorization—is something I believe we can answer fairly easily. We should do all that we can to provide opportunity for these children to flourish in our country. Scripture commands us to have a particular concern for those who are vulnerable, and immigrants are repeatedly mentioned as a group of people who fit into that category. I hope that our elected officials will not only find a permanent solution for Dreamers, young people who came or were brought as children to the country, but also for the broader immigrant community, who contribute so much to our country economically, culturally and spiritually."

Eugene Cho, Pastor, Quest Church, Seattle, Washington

As an American citizen and a Christian pastor, I am deeply concerned about the possible termination of the DACA program.

This will impact nearly 800,000 individuals and countless more when you consider their respective families. I personally know some of these young people and I can attest to the many ways they deeply contribute to their communities, neighborhoods, cities, and nation. Jesus reserved some of his strongest words of rebuke for those who caused a stumbling block for children. To prevent individuals who were brought to this country as kids, through no decision of their own, from working, pursuing education and contributing to the full extent of their God-given potential is not only short-sighted, it's also unjust. I join countless others in asking for a legislative solution to help Dreamers reach their full potential.

This week, World Relief president Scott Arbeiter also joined leaders from the National Association of Evangelicals, the Southern Baptist Convention's Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission, the Council for Christian Colleges and Universities, the National Hispanic Christian Leadership Conference, the Wesleyan Church and Korean Churches for Community Development—all of which collectively form the leadership of the Evangelical Immigration Table—in sending letters to President Trump and Congressional leaders urging them to protect those with DACA status and to work together toward a legislative solution.

These pleas from local and national leaders echo the views of most evangelical Christians “in the pews.” Polling by the Public Religion Research Institute finds that a majority of both white evangelical Protestants and non-white Protestants support granting permanent legal status to undocumented immigrants who arrived in the U.S. as children if they attend college or serve in the military, the basic premise of the DREAM Act.