



American Baptist Home Mission Societies
P.O. Box 851
Valley Forge, PA 19482-0851

800.222.3872
610.768.2000
FAX 610.768.2470

www.abhms.org

November 3, 2017

Dear Members of Congress,

American Baptist Home Mission Societies—which ministers across the United States and Puerto Rico as part of American Baptist Churches USA with approximately 5,000 local congregations comprised of 1.3 million members—joins with other faith leaders in an urgent request.

The decision to rescind Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) before legislation was enacted to protect them from deportation was immoral, as it leaves nearly 800,000 individuals facing an unknown future. Dreamers worship in our pews, study in our schools, and work in our communities. For many, the United States is where they learned to ride a bike, celebrate our nation's holidays and serve their communities. They are mothers, fathers, teachers, nurses, lawyers, scientists and leaders of a new generation of Americans – and they make our nation stronger.

As Americans and people of faith, we strive to love our neighbor and uphold the innate human dignity of each person. We, a diverse community of religious leaders, ask Congress to act today. Dreamers cannot wait, our businesses cannot wait, and our country cannot wait. **We urge all Members of Congress to immediately pass a clean Dream Act of 2017 (S. 1615/H.R. 3440)**, which provides a long overdue pathway to citizenship for immigrant youth.

Congress must pass the Dream Act immediately as a matter of moral urgency. Despite the purported six-month delay in enforcement, the consequences of terminating DACA are immediate, devastating, and profound. No new applications are being considered, and current recipients will see their protection revoked starting in March. Some recipients may have their protection jeopardized sooner if their status expires before then and they are unable to pay nearly \$500 in fees, or ensure that the Department of Homeland Security received their renewal requests by October 5. Leaving DACA recipients and other Dreamers in limbo violates our nation's values and sends a message of exclusion to immigrant youth, some of whom do not have family or a support system in their birth country. Many do not remember it, or even speak the language.

Dreamers have worked tirelessly for the country they call home to recognize them as our own. The bi-partisan Dream Act of 2017 is the culmination of that legacy. We stand with these brave individuals who embody our ideals and the future of this great country.

We have extremely serious concerns about proposals to attach harmful immigration enforcement increases with relief for Dreamers. Pairing relief for Dreamers with policy that puts their parents, siblings, and other immigrants at increased risk of deportation or detention or further infringes upon the rights and safety of border communities is unacceptable. Our outdated immigration system leaves millions unjustly detained, separated from family, and locked out of regularizing their status. Congress must enact a clean Dream Act of 2017 without attaching it to increased immigration enforcement.

We are people of faith, grounded in the teachings of our varied traditions. When there is injustice, we are called to right it. Our faith demands that we be agents of community restoration. We pray for this nation and for all people seeking safe, stable, and fruitful lives. We pray with Dreamers for relief as they face an unknown future. We pray that you—our members of Congress—will do everything in your power to immediately pass a clean Dream Act of 2017.

Sincerely,

Reverend Dr. Brenda Halliburton-Williams
National Director, Intercultural Ministries
American Baptist Home Mission Societies