



Homeland Security

December 30, 2016

The Honorable Michelle Lujan Grisham
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative Lujan Grisham:

On behalf of the Administration, I write in response to the letter you and 110 other members of Congress sent the President on December 5. In your letter, you ask us “to do everything within [our] power to safeguard the personal identifying information of DACA enrollees.” We share your concerns.

Today there are 750,000 young people enrolled in DACA who, when they applied for enrollment, relied on the U.S. government’s representations about the use of their personal identifying information. Since DACA was announced in 2012, DHS has consistently made clear that information provided by applicants will be collected and considered for the primary purpose of adjudicating their DACA requests and would be safeguarded from other immigration-related purposes. More specifically, the U.S. government represented to applicants that the personal information they provided will not later be used for immigration enforcement purposes except where it is independently determined that a case involves a national security or public safety threat, criminal activity, fraud, or limited other circumstances where issuance of a notice to appear is required by law.

We believe these representations made by the U.S. government, upon which DACA applicants most assuredly relied, must continue to be honored.

For decades, even dating back before DACA, it has been the long-standing and consistent practice of DHS (and its predecessor INS) to use information submitted by people seeking deferred action or other benefits for the limited purpose of adjudicating their requests, and not for immigration enforcement purposes except in the kinds of specified circumstances described above. This was true, for example, under the deferred action policies extended to victims of human trafficking, to foreign students affected by Hurricane Katrina, to battered immigrants under the Violence Against Women Act, and to widows and widowers of American citizens. Accordingly, people who requested to be considered under DACA, like those who requested deferred action in the past, have relied on our consistent practice concerning the information they provide about themselves and others.

The U.S. government's practice of adhering to the assurances it makes to applicants for deferred action is also consistent with the way USCIS (and the INS before it) has long protected information submitted by those seeking other benefits or relief. This includes but is not limited to individuals requesting temporary protected status, deferred enforced departure, or extended voluntary departure. In these circumstances, as with deferred action requests, USCIS and INS have abided by a longstanding and consistent practice of using information to adjudicate specific applications, but not for immigration enforcement purposes absent the limited circumstances described above.

Since DACA began, thousands of Dreamers have been able to enroll in colleges and universities, complete their education, start businesses that help improve our economy, and give back to our communities as teachers, medical professionals, engineers, and entrepreneurs—all on the books. We continue to benefit as a country from the contributions of those young people who have come forward and want nothing more than to contribute to our country and our shared future.

The co-signers of your letter will receive separate, identical responses. Should you wish to discuss this further, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jeh Charles Johnson". The signature is highly stylized and somewhat illegible due to its cursive and overlapping nature.

Jeh Charles Johnson