



Catholic Leaders Call on Secretary Kelly to Protect DACA Students

Dear Secretary Kelly:

As leaders of Catholic colleges and universities, we are dedicated to educating students from all backgrounds. In keeping with this commitment, many of our institutions are home to young men and women who are undocumented and have met the criteria for Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA). We are deeply concerned about the futures of our undocumented students.

Last November, presidents of Catholic colleges and universities made a pledge in support of DACA and our undocumented students. We remain committed to supporting our students as they face legal and financial uncertainties. The DACA policy has enabled our students to continue their studies and pursue careers in their chosen fields, from education to medicine, despite great anxiety and uncertainty. The academic year will conclude in May, and many of these students will leave our campuses for internships, summer programs and jobs. Our prayer is that they return.

While the DACA policy remains in place, expanded immigration enforcement priorities have led to the detention of at least 10 DACA holders who have not committed a criminal offense that would compromise their DACA eligibility. Attorneys and advocates have reported that at least one DACA-protected young man was deported. In addition, recent actions and statements by Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) about young people who met the DACA criteria raise many questions about the safety of our students.

The implementation of immigration enforcement policies falls under your discretion. We respectfully request a meeting with you to better understand how enforcement agencies are approaching DACA holders. We would like to better understand how immigration enforcement agencies in the Department of Homeland Security, including ICE and Customs and Border Patrol (CBP), approach DACA holders during targeted enforcement actions, police encounters or in public. The statements from ICE regarding the detentions and deportations of DACA holders have alarmed us and our students.

A statement on Twitter from the official ICE account read: “DACA is not a protected legal status, but active DACA recipients are typically a lower level of enforcement priority.”

As Catholics, our shared faith calls us to protect the most vulnerable among us. Over the years, we have opened the doors of our colleges and universities to “Dreamers” and advocated for comprehensive immigration reform so that they and their families can live safe, full lives in our country. In these uncertain times, we will continue to do everything we can to protect our students, and we urge you to join us in this pursuit.

Sincerely,

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