

## Rally held for immigrants as Trump considers fate of temporary protections

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Fearing the Trump administration could soon end temporary protections for hundreds of thousands of immigrants and leave them vulnerable to deportation, advocates, faith leaders and immigrants rallied Tuesday in Newark to plead for help.

They gathered in front of the Peter W. Rodino federal building, where Immigration and Customs Enforcement has its offices, to call attention to the issue and to urge lawmakers to pass measures that will protect them.

"Immigrants cannot be sitting home and be silent" at this time, said Chia-Chia Wang, advocacy director at American Friends Service Committee, one of the organizations that participated in the rally. "I don't think anyone can change the president's mind, but we want to urge the U.S. Congress to act...to introduce and pass legislation that will provide a permanent solution to this problem."

President Donald Trump is expected to decide soon whether to keep an Obama-era policy that protects from deportation undocumented immigrants who were brought to the country as children, a group known as Dreamers. Trump faces an ultimatum by 10 attorneys general who said if he doesn't rescind Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals, or DACA, by Sept. 5 they will take legal action.

There are nearly 800,000 immigrants nationwide, including more than 22,000 from New Jersey, who have qualified for DACA, which allows for unauthorized immigrants who came as children to receive social security cards and work authorization.

The administration will also have to decide whether to extend temporary protected status to thousands of others from 10 countries who have suffered from armed conflict or natural disasters. That protected status for nationals from El Salvador, Haiti and Honduras are to expire in a few months.

In recent days, advocates and organizations working on behalf of dreamers have issued warnings that the policy could end. United We Dream, a national immigrant youth-led organization with 55 affiliates in 26 states, recently advised that DACA holders who were given permission to travel abroad and were currently out of the country should return as soon as possible - lest they are unable to return if the policy suddenly changes.

Trump ran a campaign that focused largely on curbing illegal immigration, and he vowed to build a wall on the southern border to stop illegal crossings by immigrants. Days into his term,

he signed executive orders that directed immigration officials to enforce the country's immigration laws and to penalize cities who don't cooperate with federal enforcement efforts.

Some of Trump's supporters said they want him to continue to address illegal immigration. Susan Winton, who along with her husband, Joel, were founders of the West Bergen Tea Party, said she does not support an extension of DACA or temporary protected status.

"They should go back. They came here on a temporary basis and if you come in on a temporary basis the temporary is over, go back and come in the right way," Winton said. "There are legal ways to come into this country. It hurts, but we are a country of laws."

Temporary status for Honduras is set to expire on Jan. 5, for Haiti on Jan. 22 and for El Salvador on March 9. White House Chief of Staff John Kelly recently told Haitians they should be preparing to go home.

"The indication is that they want to end it," said Blanca Molina, executive director of Comité En Unión para Salvadoreños, a nonprofit organization founded by immigrants. "We know that with this president this might not matter, but we hope to get support from more people and also to involve those impacted to get involved in this immigrant rights movement."

Molina said there are about 10,000 Salvadoran nationals and about 2,500 from Honduras with TPS living in New Jersey. She didn't know how many with TPS from Haiti reside in New Jersey, but nationally there are 60,000 Haitians who have temporary protected status, Wang said.

TPS recipients are not eligible to apply for permanent residence or for U.S. citizenship.

"As the Trump administration considers not renewing TPS, they must understand we will not stand idly by as they insist on assaulting American values by kicking out as many immigrants as possible in the name of nativism," said Senator Robert Menendez, who appeared at the rally.

On Wednesday, Menendez will join students and community advocates in another rally, this one at 10:30 a.m. at New Jersey City University in Jersey City.

Maria Hernandez, of Morristown, is among those who have been able to live in the U.S. and work legally because of TPS. Hernandez was born in Honduras and has lived in the U.S. for more than 20 years, she said. In 1999, TPS was extended to Hondurans after Hurricane Mitch swept through Central America causing severe flooding.

"It has opened so many doors for us. Many of us have businesses, houses, cars, and this is a situation that is in danger," she said in Spanish at the rally. "They want to take this away...and many doors will close for many of us in this situation. I ask the president and congress to support this situation, this program, which has helped us."

Some others with TPS said they have American-born children and if they don't have the temporary protection they could be deported and separated from their families.

Fernando Cunha, of Roxbury, who was born in Brazil and came to the country when he was 8, is among those who received dreamer status. Cunha, a full-time student at the County College of Morris, said he is very worried about DACA ending, but said if the program is revoked he expects push-back from Democratic lawmakers.

"It doesn't make any sense to take this away from us," he said. "We only know this country, many of us, this is the only country we know,"

From January to March, more than 107,200 DACA applications were approved for two-year renewals, while another 17,275 received approvals for the first time, according to figures from U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services.

On the campaign trail, Trump called DACA a form of amnesty and said that he would get rid of it if he became president. But once he won the election, he said that the policy was a very difficult subject for him. In June, the administration issued a statement that DACA continued to be under review and that the president "has remarked on the need to handle the issue with compassion and with heart."

That month, however, 10 attorneys general, including Ken Paxton from Texas, threatened to sue the administration if DACA was not rescinded by Sept. 5. Paxton stated that the program was created improperly because it did not get congressional approval.

In August, however, six Republican congress members from California, Florida, Nebraska and New York wrote a letter to Trump asking him not to rescind DACA, saying that participants of the program were brought to the country as children without a choice. These immigrants, they said, have passed background checks and are making contributions to the economy by paying taxes, buying cars and homes.

"They did not willingly seek to violate American statutes when they traveled with their families across our borders, as the alternative was often life without primary caregivers," reads the letter dated Aug. 22. "Such cases require careful and thoughtful analysis about what is in the best interests of our country."

The letter pointed to a recent study by the CATO Institute that found that deporting DACA recipients could cost more than \$60 billion in lost tax revenue and result in a \$280 billion reduction in economic growth over the next decade.

Those Republicans said it is in the best interest of the nation to continue DACA until a permanent legislation, such as the Republican-backed Recognizing America's Children Act could be passed. That act would provide a path to legal status for undocumented immigrants brought to the country as children.

Erika J. Nava, a policy analyst for New Jersey Policy Perspective, has looked at the possible consequences the Garden State could face if DACA is revoked. She said the state could lose an estimated \$1.5 billion in annual GDP, since many DACA recipients are working and paying taxes.