

Congress-members, Civil Rights Organizations Denounce Repeal of DACA

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Following the Trump administration's announcement Sept. 5 morning, repealing the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals program that protects 800,000 undocumented youth from deportation, several Indian American members of Congress and prominent civil rights organizations immediately decried the president's actions as unbecoming to the country's core principles.

"America's values are founded on the ideal that all people are created equal and deserve justice. The president's decision to **terminate DACA** puts 800,000 individuals at risk of deportation from the only country they've ever called home," stated Suman Raghunathan, executive director of South Asian Americans Leading Together.

"Ending DACA is the latest evidence of this administration's utter lack of commitment to our nation's founding values of equality and fairness," she said in a press statement.

"This issue is personal for me because I too was brought to the United States by my parents as a child. The hope for a better a life which carried my parents here was no different from that of the parents of Dreamers, and generations of immigrants before," said Rep. Raja Krishnamoorthi, D-Illinois.

"Through this action, the Administration is turning its back on some of our country's best and brightest. Stripping 780,000 DREAMERS of their DACA status will cost our economy nearly half a trillion dollars over 10 years while robbing our country of thousands of entrepreneurs and contributors at leading companies," said the Indian American congressman in a press statement.

A study issued in January by the CATO Institute – a libertarian think tank – estimated that deporting all 800,000 DACA recipients would cost the federal government \$60 billion, and reduce economic growth by \$280 billion over the next 10 years.

The Center for American Progress – a liberal think tank – issued a report in July summing that ending DACA would result in a loss of \$460.3 billion from the national GDP over the next decade, and remove about 685,000 workers from the U.S. economy.

Krishnamoorthi, who was born in New Delhi and came to the U.S. when he was three months old, noted that Trump has delayed repeal of DACA for six months and has urged Congress to come up with a legislative solution to protect undocumented children who are now at risk for deportation. The majority of DACA recipients also have work permits, which would become invalid once they expire (see separate story).

Rep. Pramila Jayapal, D-Washington, also called upon fellow members of Congress to pass legislation protecting Dreamers. “Donald Trump has shown exactly what his priorities are. He has once again sided with hate and xenophobia, putting in place a repeal that is cruel, inhumane and unjust,” said the congresswoman, who was born in Chennai and emigrated to the U.S. as a teenager.

“Let me be clear: Our immigrant brothers and sisters are here to stay. Not only are they welcome in our communities – they are essential to our communities,” Jayapal stated in a press release.

Rep. Ro Khanna, D-Calif., also denounced the administration’s actions. “Since 2012, nearly 800,000 young people who immigrated to this country have had the opportunity to go to school, gain employment, and continue on with their lives minus the fear of deportation.”

“Today, the Trump Administration once again shows it has no dignity for our friends, neighbors, and colleagues. We must safeguard the livelihood of Dreamers and provide these inspiring young people and their courageous parents a pathway to citizenship,” said Khanna in a press statement, noting that 40 percent of undocumented students enrolled at a University of California campus are Asian Americans.

A spokeswoman for the UC Office of the President told **India-West** that 4,000 undocumented students are enrolled across the nine UC campuses. UC president Janet Napolitano, who formerly served as the head of the Department of Homeland Security during the Obama administration, stated her commitment to supporting Dreamer students after DACA’s repeal.

“I am deeply troubled by President Trump’s decision. This backward-thinking, far-reaching move threatens to separate families and derail the futures of some of this country’s brightest young minds, thousands of whom currently attend or have graduated from the University of California,” stated Napolitano.

The UC president said undocumented students who are California residents would continue to pay in-state tuition. Napolitano promised to maintain the Dream loan program, which provides financial aid to undocumented students. She also stated that free legal services would be offered to undocumented students, and added that she would instruct campus police not to contact, detain, question or arrest individuals based on suspected undocumented status, or to enter agreements to undertake joint efforts to make arrests for federal immigration law violations.

The South Asian Bar Association of North America also stated its strong opposition to the repeal of DACA.

“These young people, brought to the United States as children, have shown a desire to conform with the law, and are likely to be punished for doing so,” said president Rishi Bagga, noting that once DACA protection ends, young people who signed up for the program and gave crucial identifying information to federal agencies would now be at immediate risk for deportation.

“Rescinding DACA effectually takes away these young people's right to live in the only country they have ever known,” said Bagga.

SABA North America has issued a call to action, asking the community to contact members of Congress to urge them to pass legislation which would protect undocumented youth from deportation.

