

## **Pittsburgh Bishop Zubik, Pennsylvania lawmakers speak out about dismantling DACA**

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Faith leaders from across the nation, including Pittsburgh Catholic Bishop David A. Zubik, condemned the Trump administration's decision Tuesday to begin dismantling the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals program.

Pennsylvania's senators also issued statements about the move.

The DACA program, an Obama administration initiative that provides for legal protections for 800,000 immigrant residents, will end, and the Trump administration is giving Congress six months to come up with a legislative fix to the issue.

Prior to Tuesday's announcement by Attorney General Jeff Sessions about DACA, Zubik asked "everyone" to urge the president to continue what he termed a "vital program for older teens and young adults who were brought to this country without documents when they were children.

"These young people are known as the 'dreamers' because they believe in the American dream. They have grown up here. They share our language, they share our values and they share their gifts and talents with us, their neighbors," Zubik said in a statement.

"In 2012, DACA was enacted to make sure that the dreamers could seek higher education, get a good job, a driver's license and pass a background check without fear of deportation," Zubik said. "DACA is for young people with no criminal history, who are students or who have graduated high school or its equivalent or who are veterans of the U.S. military.

"Over the past five years, about 800,000 young people have benefited and continue to benefit from this program. If it is discontinued, they stand to lose their work permits and face deportation to a country where they have no home," Zubik said.

The bishop invoked the biblical message of Jesus, whose parents fled with him across the border to another country to save his life.

"Today our nation is home to many young people whose parents carried them across the border as children, often to save them from violence or the kind of grinding poverty that leads to sickness and death. They did not make the choice to cross the border without documents; others made it for them," Zubik said.

"Now DACA is in peril. Jesus has told us that we will be judged on how we care for the least and the vulnerable, because it is how we care for him."

He urged people to contact President Donald Trump, U.S. Sens. Pat Toomey and Bob Casey, as well as congressional representatives, and ask them to insist that DACA remains policy.

"Do it for the dreamers. Do it for Jesus," Zubik said.

His message was echoed by other Catholic bishops across the country and other religious leaders.

Pennsylvania's senators also issued statements about the Trump administration's move.

Toomey, R-Zionsville, said in a statement that children who were brought to the U.S. illegally and at a young age "are not at fault and deserve our support.

"However, President Obama did not have the legal authority to create the DACA program and to ignore enforcement of existing immigration law," Toomey said. "President Trump's decision to end this program, while giving Congress six months to come up with a legislative solution, is the right step.

"Congress needs to pass legislation to accommodate these young people while simultaneously addressing the other challenges within our deeply broken immigration system, including stopping dangerous sanctuary cities, strengthening border security and cracking down on companies that hire people who are here illegally."

U.S. Rep. Keith Rothfus, R-12, Sewickley, issued a written statement Tuesday in support of the dismantling.

"President Obama himself asserted that he did not have the authority to change our immigration laws unilaterally, but then illegally implemented DACA anyway in an election-year ploy to rally his base," Rothfus said "The Trump administration's action to end this unconstitutional program restores the rule of law and allows Congress to reclaim its constitutional authority to set immigration policy.

"Immigration reform begins with securing our borders and establishing a functioning entry and exit system. We can then begin solving the challenges of our broken immigration system, including addressing the status of children who were brought here through no fault of their own by their parents."

Casey, D-Scranton, called the move "an insult to America and our values."

"The 'dreamers' are young people who have lived in our country since they were children. They have been law-abiding residents who have learned English, paid taxes and secured jobs that allow them to support themselves and their families. Our government promised them that they would be protected if they came forward, and now President Trump is breaking that promise," Casey said in a statement.

"President Trump's action today is an insult to America and our values. This action is profoundly unjust, immoral and without regard for basic fairness. Tearing apart the lives of these young people will make our nation less safe, and harm our economy.

"According to the CATO Institute, deporting Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals recipients would cost more than \$60 billion and would result in a \$280 billion reduction in economic growth over the next decade. The Institute on Taxation and Economic Policy estimates that the 1.3 million young people enrolled in or eligible for DACA pay \$2 billion each year in state and local taxes," Casey said.

"It's clear that Republicans in Washington and the Trump Administration are not serious about fixing the problem of illegal immigration, securing our border and reforming our immigration system. Instead, their only plan is to deport 11 million individuals, including 790,000 'dreamers.'

"Congress should move immediately to pass the bipartisan Development, Relief and Education for Alien Minors (DREAM) Act, which would allow the 'dreamers' to become permanent residents if they meet the very stringent qualifications outlined in the bill," Casey said.