

Our Lady of Lourdes Social Justice Committee

WHAT IS THE BRIDGE ACT?

DACA - Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals – June 15, 2012, President Obama announced an **executive order** (can be repealed by another president) stating that the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) would not deport certain undocumented youth who came to the United States **as children**. They may be granted a type of temporary permission to stay in the U.S. The number of young immigrants approved for DACA is around 740,000. Their names are now a matter of record. It would be easy for ICE (Immigration and Customs Enforcement) to find them.

The DREAM Act was an American legislative **proposal** that would give undocumented immigrants, who came to the U.S. as children, a path toward legal status if they attend college or serve in the military. *This legislation was never passed.*

The BRIDGE Act is a piece of **bipartisan legislation** which has been introduced in 2016 and 2017 in both the Senate and House. This legislation would allow people who are eligible for, or who have received work authorization and **temporary** relief from deportation through **DACA**, to continue living in the U.S. with permission from the federal government. The intent is to give them protection for a limited time against deportation until a new immigration policy is legislated.

CATHOLIC SOCIAL TEACHING

The Catholic Catechism says that good government has two duties:

- Welcome the foreigner out of charity and respect for the human person.
- Secure one's border and enforce the law for the sake of the common good. "Immigrants are obliged to respect with gratitude the material and spiritual heritage of the country that receives them, to obey its laws and assist in carrying civic burdens." (Catholic Catechism, 2241)
"{w}hen persons cannot find employment in their country of origin to support themselves and their families, they have a right to find work elsewhere in order to survive. Sovereign nations should provide ways to accommodate this right." (no 35)
- Over 20 passages in the Hebrew Scriptures remind the Jewish people to take care of the stranger, for they also were strangers in their land.
- Jesus taught that what we do to the least of our brothers we do to him.

WHAT CAN YOU DO?

Hundreds of thousands of young people, who are in every way Americans, except on paper, go to bed every night with the threat of deportation looming over them. Many know nothing of the countries they came from as children. Many don't speak the language. If you are concerned about their situation, caused through no fault of their own, please contact your legislators now and tell them you want them to support the BRIDGE ACT. There is no way of knowing how quickly this legislation (which has been introduced in 2016 and 2017) will come up for a vote.

Sen. Ron Johnson

- Milwaukee (414) 276-7282
- Washington Office (202) 224-5323

Sen. Tammy Baldwin

- Milwaukee Office (414) 297-4451
- Washington Office (202) 224-5653

Congressional Switchboard (can direct you to your representative) 202-224-3121

Dear Senator,

I write you on behalf of the Committee on Migration of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB/COM) in support of S. 3542, the "Bar Removal of Individuals who Dream and Grow our Economy (BRIDGE) Act," bipartisan legislation that was introduced late in the 114th Congress by Senators Lindsey Graham (R-SC) and Richard Durbin (D-IL). We ask that you consider cosponsoring this important measure when it is reintroduced during the 115th Congress.

As you may know, the BRIDGE Act would provide temporary relief from deportation and ensure employment authorization to individuals who are eligible for the Department of Homeland Security's Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program. It would accomplish this by providing DACA-eligible individuals with "provisional protected presence" and employment authorization. Applicants would be required to pay a reasonable fee, be subject to criminal background checks, and meet a number of eligibility criteria indicating that they: (1) came to the United States as minors, (2) grew up in this country, (3) have pursued an education or have served in the military, (4) have not committed any serious crimes, and (5) do not pose a threat to our country. Temporary protection under the BRIDGE Act would ensure that these young people can continue to work and study and be protected from deportation while Congress debates broader legislation to fix our broken immigration system.

There are more than 740,000 young people who have received and benefitted from DACA. They are contributors to our economy, academic standouts in our universities, and leaders in our parishes. As Catholics, we support DACA as we believe in protecting the dignity of every human being, especially that of our children. These young people entered the U.S. as children and know America as their only home.

While we endorse the BRIDGE Act and support DACA youth, we note that DACA and the provisional protected presence status in the measure are temporary substitutes for larger legislative reform of our immigration laws that our country so desperately needs. We vow to work with Congress and the new Administration to reform our immigration system in a humane and common-sense manner. However, in the meantime, enactment of the BRIDGE Act would help ensure that these young individuals who were brought to the United States as children and are contributing so much to our nation can continue to live their lives free of the anxiety that they could at any time be deported to a country they do not know and separated from their families.

Sincerely,

Most Reverend Joe Vásquez

Chairman, USCCB Committee on Migration