

DREAM Act of 2017

What is the Dream Act of 2017?

The Dream Act of 2017 (S.1615 / H.R. 3440) is bipartisan bill that was introduced in the Senate on July 20, 2017 and in the House on July 26, 2017. It would protect an estimated 1.8 million immigrant youth from deportation, including the approximately 790,000 Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) recipients.

How does the Dream Act protect these youth?

The bill offers qualifying immigrant youth, including current DACA recipients, “conditional permanent resident status” and a path to full lawful permanent residency and eventual citizenship. To receive the conditional status, the youth must, among other requirements:

- have entered the U.S. as a child;
- been continuously present in the United States for at least 4 years prior to enactment of the bill;
- meet certain admissibility and security requirements, including a background check; and
- been admitted to an institution of higher education or have obtained or be pursuing secondary education.

The bill allows recipients of this conditional status to obtain non-conditional lawful permanent residency if recipients satisfy requirements that include: background checks; demonstrated English proficiency, as well as knowledge of U.S. history and civics; and either education in a higher learning institution, honorable military service, three years of employment in the United States, or a hardship exception.

Why is a legislative solution needed?

On June 29, 2017, ten states urged the Administration to rescind the DACA program, stating that they would bring a lawsuit against the program if the Administration failed to do so. On September 5, the Administration rescinded the DACA program. Congress, however, could permanently protect DACA recipients and other immigrant youth who are contributing to our nation – and provide them with a path to citizenship – through legislation.

How is the Dream Act different than the BRIDGE Act?

While both bills seek to protect a similar population of immigrant youth, the “Bar Removal of Individuals who Dream and Grow our Economy (BRIDGE) Act,” S. 3542, would only provide DACA eligible youth with temporary relief from deportation through “provisional protected presence.” This status would last from the date granted until three years after the BRIDGE Act is enacted. The bill is a stop-gap measure to protect DACA youth, but it does not provide long-term protection or the ability to eventually seek citizenship.

Does USCCB/MRS support the Dream Act?

Yes. USCCB’s Committee on Migration issued a letter in support of the bill, which you can read in full here. Bishop Vasquez, Chairman of the Committee, stated: “The Catholic Bishops have long supported these immigrant youths and their families who are contributors to our economy, academic standouts in our universities, and leaders in our parishes. These youths have grown up in our country, some even choosing to put their lives on the line to serve in our armed forces. They truly exemplify the extraordinary contributions that immigrants can provide to our nation.”

What can I do to help support the Dream Act?

As Catholics, we have long supported Dreamers as we believe in protecting the dignity of every human being, especially that of our children. We ask you to:

- Voice Your Support for DREAMERS. We encourage you to issue a statement of support for DACA Youth and the existing DACA program. These statements are needed by Bishops and community leaders in all states.
- Urge Republican Lawmakers to Support the Dream Act. As efforts continue to keep the Dream Act a bipartisan bill, further Republican support for the bill is essential. We encourage you to renew your support for Dreamers by sending a message to your U.S. Senators and Representatives urging them to co-sponsor S. 1615/ H.R. 3440. You can do so here.