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## **CALIFORNIA CATHOLIC BISHOPS URGE IMMIGRATION REFORM FOR DACA YOUTH AND THEIR FAMILIES**

### **Pledge Abiding Solidarity with Immigrants; Denounce the Administration's End of Program Offering Hope**

***The Catholic Bishops of California released the following statement today in anticipation of a Trump Administration announcement on Tuesday terminating the DACA Program in 6 months. DACA (Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals) is a program to temporarily suspend deportation proceedings in the case of undocumented young persons brought to the United States as minors, many of whom have no memory of being raised in any other country but the United States. It is estimated that 800,000 people are covered under this program, 200,000 of them in California alone. Please attribute to the Catholic Bishops of California:***

SACRAMENTO, CA -- The Catholic Bishops of California believe, along with many of our fellow Californians, that immigrant youth and their families are a critical part of California's future vitality. We will continue to believe in them, pray for them, and work with them for a society where all God's children may enjoy life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. We invite all those who share this dream to join us as sentinels of hope for the hundreds of thousands of young people who have registered or are eligible for the DACA program. While the decision of the Administration may eclipse our common aspirations for them, we should not let our confidence be diminished. We have faith that this momentary shadow will pass and our hopeful light will continue to burn brightly.

Sustaining the status of DACA students against the current threats is imperative but more must be done. We urge all responsible political leadership at the state and federal level to work for comprehensive immigration reform and to put meaningful and effective immigration reform on the President's desk before the DACA program expires. This is the most reasonable and sustainable remedy for the DACA students and their families, and for all immigrants.

DACA, the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals program, was from the beginning a tentative and tenuous attempt to ameliorate the frustrating circumstances for many undocumented young men and women who through no fault of their own found themselves falling through the cracks of a broken immigration system and rejected by the only country they know as home.

The current actions by the Administration further aggravate years of bipartisan indifference and inaction on comprehensive immigration reform. Now is the moment for Congress to show courage and compassion despite the Administration's capricious, ill-conceived action. The lack of political will has become a moral betrayal of America's long-standing beacon of hope beckoning all those yearning to be

free. The need for the political leadership on all sides of the aisle to work toward a bipartisan solution grows more and more urgent every day. Now they apparently have a clear deadline to craft reasonable and effective comprehensive immigration reform.

DACA students are not the so-called “bad hombres,” an insidious label used to instill fear in others and feed the racism and nativism that unfortunately is rearing its ugly head in our cities. Far from it, DACA eligible youth are high school graduates, in school or working on their GED. Many are now in college. They may be honorably discharged members of the armed services. No one convicted of a felony or serious misdemeanor (or three misdemeanors) can apply for DACA.

These young people are working in businesses and professional jobs, harvesting our fields, building our homes, and providing many of the services of hospitality we take for granted. They have placed their lives on the line to defend our liberty and freedom. Most importantly, they are giving back to the only nation they have ever known. They are the hard working good neighbors America needs to compete in the global economy of today.

Catholics – both in our parishes and larger service organizations such as Catholic Charities and the Catholic Legal Immigration Network (CLINIC) – will remain steadfast in offering assistance to immigrants. As Bishops, every day we see the impact of the failure of a political leadership that washes its hands while immigrants suffer. We choose to continue to serve, comfort, and protect our brothers and sisters. We will not protect serious and violent criminals and we will work with authorities in advancing security and other legitimate requirements. We will, however, not allow reckless rhetoric to bully us from the course of compassion and basic decency.

We are encouraged by the fatherly admonition of Pope Francis: “[C]hildren are a sign. They are a sign of hope, a sign of life, but also a “diagnostic” sign, a marker indicating the health of families, society and the entire world. Wherever children are accepted, loved, cared for and protected, the family is healthy, society is more healthy and the world is more human.”

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