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“Dreamers” and US Citizenship

"Dreamers" are children who were brought to this country by their parents for a better life from different countries such as Mexico, Jamaica, Haiti, Cuba, Honduras, and other Central American countries. This does not include US territories (Puerto Rico and The Virgin Islands). The ages of Dreamers vary from birth to 18 years of age. On August 1, 2001, the United States Congress proposed a law called The Dream Act which grants dreamers temporary residency in the US and leads them to becoming a Green Card holder and then a U.S citizen. However, this law was not passed and has been revised over 10 times throughout the years (The Dream Act, DACA, and Other Policies Designed to Protect Dreamers, 2020). On June 15, 2012, President Obama signed an executive order called Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) which provided dreamers temporary protection from deportation, work lawfully, attend school, obtain a drivers' licenses in some states and they can qualify for in-state tuition and state-funded grants and loans in some states. However, every two years it must be renewed (Dickerson, 2020). Since 2012, more than 825,000 dreamers who came to this country took advantage of DACA and applied for DACA status. There are about 28,180 DACA recipients who live in New York State and 28,000 in New York City (Svajlenka and Wolgin, 2020).

The problem is that children who are brought to the US by their parents at various ages from birth to 18 years of age for a better life face many difficulties. Not being a US citizen or having a Green Card hinders dreamers from attending college because of a lack of financial income, any Federal Aid and scholarships. Trying to get into the workforce is difficult because you need to have a Social Security number to get the job. According to "Who is DACA and Who are the Dreamers", on September 5, 2017 President Trump and his Administration ordered an end to the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program. This means that over 800,000 young adults/children would be eligible for deportation, lose access towards their education and work visas. (Anti-Defamation League, 2020). If DACA ends, nearly 704,000 current recipients will be heavily affected which means they will lose their driver's licenses, in-state tuition and state-funded aid and their occupations. Dreamers would be at great risk if they lose complete or partial access to these provisions if DACA were terminated (Mathema, 2018). On November 14, 2020 the federal judge in New York City said Chad Wolf, the Chief of Homeland Security wasn't acting lawfully because he suspended the protection for a class of migrants who were brought to the US illegally as children is invalid. According to judge Nicholas Garaufis, "Wolf was not lawfully serving as Acting Secretary of Homeland Security under the HSA [Homeland Security Act] when he issued the Wolf Memorandum" that suspended DACA. (Romero, 2020).

This affects children because they are getting deported to a country that they don't know anything about. They can't get a higher education, they can't travel outside of the US, getting into the workforce and more. Families are affected because they can face deportation and be separated from their children, spouses, relatives, and

communities and sent back to a country that they might not even remember. For example, Zoila Pelayo (33) who's a DACA recipient (DREAMER) was brought to this country by her parents at the age of six and lived her life as American. Pelayo's believed that she was shielded from deportation and was safe until she got arrested for driving without a license and was handed over to U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE). She thought her life was over, leaving her husband and her children to go to a place that she has no memory of (Munoz, 2019). They will also be affected by losing their jobs which put themselves and their families at a greater risk of economic, food, housing insecurity, as well as health care and other services.

The community will be affected if dreamers get deported because they help give to the economic growth of this country and to the workforce. And if they lose their benefits the economy will take a huge hit. According to the Center of American Progress (CAP), DACA has opened doors to job training programs, higher education and other opportunities to pursue a better-paying job. The largest occupation for DACA recipients are food preparations, administrative and office supports 66,000 workers, 61,000 workers in sales, 28,000 workers in management and business occupation, 16,000 workers in education and training occupation, and 27,000 workers in health care practitioner and support occupation are DACA recipients employed. The Center of American Progress (CAP) analysis of American Community survey (ACS) microdata Daca recipients and their households pays \$5.7 billion in federal taxes and \$3.1 billion in state and local taxes. DACA recipients boost social security and medicare through payroll taxes. (Svajlenka, 2019)

The people who are most affected by this issue are people who cross the border for a better life, children/adults who came to the US at a very young age. it's not just one area or specific group. However, just to list a few target groups such as Cubans, Mexicans, Hondurans, Haitians, Jamaicans, Syrians, etc. not including any US Territories such as Puerto Rico, The US Virgin Islands, etc. The intervention for children and their families to avoid negative consequences needs to happen now not years or centuries. The intervention that's needed is that Congress needs to pass the latest Dream Act "The American and Promise Act of 2019 (H.R. 6)", The House of Representatives already passed this bill by a vote of 237 to 187. The American Council on Education and about 40 higher education sent letters to all members of the House, including Speaker Nancy Pelosi (D-CA) and Minority Leader Kevin McCarthy (R-CA) before the vote. (American Council on Education, 2019). President-Elect Joe Biden when he takes office on January 20, 2021 needs to sign off on the Executive Order called The American and Promise Act of 2019 (H.R. 6). This Act will give dreamers a pathway to permanent legal status for 10 years if they meet certain requirements.

This issue needs to be addressed right away because we need to protect these young children/adults and pass a law that gives them a pathway to citizenship. It doesn't need to take years to make this happen because these dreamers give a lot to society and to the economy. We can't wait until dreamers get older or out of high school because how would they know how to plan their future and not be discouraged because of their status? We need President-Elect Joe Biden to issue a new Executive Order to give Dreamers opportunities to stay in this country without fear of being deported and to get Green Cards and ultimately, a pathway to US citizenship. In order

to fix this issue we the people and Congress need to come together and discuss ways to help protect and give these dreamers the "American Dream" that they came to the US for. The change that I'm advocating for is to give these dreamers a chance to better themselves, make them American Citizens and not for them to worry about what's going to happen to them and their families. The intervention that is needed to discuss this issue is to organize a protest, develop a petition, gather stakeholders for action, and develop a social media campaign.

The target audience who can bring change firstly is the Community members such as families, teachers, church goers, etc. Secondly is the House of Representative, thirdly is Senate, Fourthly is Congress, and lastly the President. They can help because they are the only ones who can pass the law that's needed and the community members are there for support. The plan is to pass a law that dreamers (DACA, TPS, Undocumented people) can become US citizens. In order for that to occur I believe that my target audience will do everything in their power to make this law pass and to make these dreamers become US citizens.

Resource Source Summaries

In the first article, "What We Know About DACA recipients in the United States" by Nicole P. Svajlenka, published on September 5, 2019. It says that two years ago, the Trump Administration wanted to end the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) which leaves dreamers and their families in the dark and uncertain about their futures. Congress remains unable to create a permanent solution for these dreamers and their families, however, the Supreme Court is preparing to hear arguments in November to decide whether the Administration rescission effort was unlawful. Also, the American

public supports these dreamers and believe that they should have the opportunity to remain permanently and have a pathway to citizenship. These dreamers contribute to the economy in ways that benefit the nation.

According to Nicole P. Svajlenka, DACA recipients grow up in the US and they attend and graduate school, embark on careers and start their families. According to Center for American Progress (CAP) analysis of American Community Survey (ACS) microdata, nearly 256,000 U.S.- born and thus U.S born, children have at least one parent that is a DACA recipient. During her research she shows the statistics of DACA recipients that work in different occupations and how they give to their community and the economy.

In the second article, "What DACA Recipients Stand to Lose and What States Can Do About It" by Silva Mathema, published September 13, 2018. It says that it's been six years since the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) went into effect and how DACA has given nearly 800,000 dreamers access to basic freedom such as having a driver's license, work permits, affordable higher education and in most states a professional license. At the moment DACA recipients are living in a limbo because of the Trump Administration trying to end DACA in September 2017. Losing DACA would impact nearly 704,000 dreamers and that they can lose full access for everything or partial access. Even if DACA ends, states can help protect dreamers by providing some sense of normalcy in their daily lives and they can carry out common-sense solutions to make sure that their unauthorized immigrant residents can receive driver's licenses, affordable higher education, and for them to get professional and occupational licenses.

In the article, Silva Mathema mentions that in all 50 states DACA recipients have access to drivers licenses and in 2018, nearly 78 percent of dreamers got their first driver's license, and about 62 percent of dreamers got their first state ID card. She also mentioned that if DACA is lost that higher education would be less accessible even though about 40 percent of respondents in a national survey are enrolled in secondary or postsecondary education, with more than 74 percent of them pursuing a bachelor's degree or higher. Also she talks about access to professional and occupational licenses would be limited if DACA ends. Also she talks about how states should act now and protect dreamers and not wait for DACA to end. She explained that states shouldn't have to wait for Congress to pass legislation to grant a pathway to citizenship for dreamers. They should protect dreamers and help make sure that once Congress passes a law that benefits them, dreamers will reach their full potential.

In the article, *The Dream Act, DACA, and Other Policies Designed to Protect Dreamers*, published on August 27, 2020. This article talks about what DACA is and what are the requirements to apply. This article is also about how the Trump Administration wanted to end the DACA program on September 5, 2017. It also touched on topics such as the DREAM Act which means Development, Relief, and Education for Alien Minors that was introduced in August 2001. Over the last 19 years, there have been 10 different versions of the DREAM Act that were introduced to Congress but none of them passed.

The most recently revised DREAM Act bill was introduced again in May 2019, The House Judiciary Committee passed H.R. 2820 on May 22, 2019 and joined it with H.R. 2821, the American Promise Act of 2019. This would allow dreamers to have a pathway to

citizenship however, there are steps and those steps are first, Conditional Permanent Residence. Secondly, Lawful Permanent Residence and lastly Naturalization.

Small Advocacy Action

I will bring attention to this issue by writing letters to lawmakers such as Congressman José E. Serrano, Senator Luis R. Sepúlveda, President-Elect Joe Biden, etc. making phone calls, sending emails, organizing meetings to tell the communities, protest, write and distribute petitions about the issue at hand and demand change/action.

Large Advocacy Action

My target audience and I will discuss what we think the bill should look like and how it should be presented to the dreamers and the country. Meaning when creating the bill we would have to talk about the age requirements, who's eligible to apply, what do we do if they have a criminal background (nothing major but minor). Stakeholders such as community members such as church goers, families, teachers, etc. should be informed about who are dreamers, they should spread the word to other people in and out of their communities and most importantly we must support them.

Commentary

I chose this topic because it hit very close to home for me since I'm a DACA recipient "A Dreamer". I was brought to this country at the age of 11 by my mother from Antigua because she wanted a better life for me. It was hard for me being in high school finding out that I couldn't do half of the things that other children who are US citizens would've done like travel abroad to a different country to learn because I didn't have a green card or that I am not an US citizen. It felt like I was missing out on a lot of great opportunities. This subject is meaningful to me because I know how it feels being in a place where not knowing what's going to happen and how your life is going to plan out because of your Status. People who are born in the US or have a green card don't truly understand the stress and pain that come with being a Dreamer.

This will impact me as an Early Childhood professional because I will be more aware of the families who are going are "Dreamers" and those who have uncertainty about their lives living in the US.

E.P.I.C. Message Section

Dear Congressman José E. Serrano,

My name is Lacoya Richards, I am here today to talk to you about dreamers and the help they need from you to become US Citizens.

E-Did you know that there are nearly 800,000 dreamers living inside the United States? Did you know that dreamers fear for their lives everyday, spending every waking moment wondering "if" or "when" they would be approached by ICE to be deported? No! You don't. You don't know what it means to be a dreamer and to fear about being taken away from your family, your spouse or your children. The same way how you love America and call it your home, us dreamers do the same.

P-Many dreamers are stock in a limbo trying to figure out what is going to happen to them. Is there going to be some sort of resolution when it comes to their status or is there going to be a pathway to citizenship for these dreamers because the fear of being deported is very high.

I- The change I'm advocating for is dreamers to become US citizens. This needs to happen now because it's been years Congress and Government officials made any decision on passing The Dream Act bill.

C- We are here to discuss what the bill will initial and how dreamers can apply for it. Also to get stakeholders involved and inform them about what they can do to spread the word throughout the community. Mr. José E. Serrano we the dreamers need you to pass this bill so that we can proceed to live our lives in peace and not in fear!

Sincerely, Lacoya Richards

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