



Evangelical Leader Statement of Principles on Dreamers

Christians, like most Americans, recognize immigration policy is complex and the search for political consensus is difficult. While we feel the tension between our obligations to both Christian compassion and respect for the rule of law, we reject the idea that the two are irreconcilable. Accepting this false dichotomy perpetuates an immigration system which all Americans agree is broken.

Today, there are 800,000 immigrants who find themselves in a new stage of uncertainty and insecurity. A federal program called Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) has been rescinded. DACA deferred deportation proceedings for a subgroup of undocumented immigrants—those who entered the United States as children brought by their parents. Participants in the program, among other requirements, demonstrated a commitment to education, employment, or service in our military; have no criminal backgrounds; and reported for a biometric appointment with federal officials.

We support the underlying policy aim of DACA because we believe this is a special category of immigrants who are not legally culpable, who in most cases have no home other than the United States, and who are a blessing to their communities and to their churches. At the same time, many of us shared a skepticism about the prudence of accomplishing the aim solely through temporary action of the Executive Branch. Indeed, the reversal of this policy and the uncertainty created for existing DACA recipients prove that a proper solution requires legislative action.

Biblically understood, a just system of law always has in view human flourishing. We advocate for change to particular laws when needed because of our respect for the rule of law. Many of us have participated in our nation's debate over immigration policy reform for well over a decade, and these conversations within our churches about the national immigration crisis have produced significant consensus among members of our churches and communities.

We now call on Congress for a timely solution on a narrow issue of national consensus: provide a legal remedy for the subset of undocumented immigrants who were brought to the United States as children by their parents, those immigrants commonly called Dreamers.

To that end, we offer the following principles.

Statement of Principles

We believe it is unjust to punish children for offenses they did not commit. We recognize that Dreamers are a special category of immigrants because they broke no law and committed no offense. How we treat this category of immigrants is therefore not just a policy or political issue—it is a moral issue. Subjecting Dreamers to deportation or lives of perpetual insecurity in the shadows of our communities is an offense to the rule of law and to the purpose of government, which is for the good of people.

We believe America's borders must be secure. The federal government bears a God-given responsibility to ensure the security of our nation. We hold a variety of opinions on how best to achieve satisfactory border security, but we all agree that border security is a necessary ingredient to reforming our immigration system.

We believe we should welcome Dreamers of good moral character and who are working hard to contribute to our country. Young immigrants who participated in the DACA program have demonstrated they are good neighbors who contribute positively to our country. They have proven this by pursuing education, working and paying taxes, sacrificially serving in our military, and rejecting lives of crime. We also believe that governments have a fundamental responsibility to protect their citizens. A solution for Dreamers rightly excludes those convicted of felonies or multiple misdemeanors.

We believe Dreamers deserve to be recognized as our fellow Americans. Foundational American ideas like freedom, self-government, and equality are worthy of our allegiance as Christians when they harmonize with biblical truths about the dignity of every human being. We are a nation founded on ideas, not ethnicity; being American is about pledging allegiance to our nation's ideals. We should include Dreamers, who already have shown themselves willing to play by the rules, in that opportunity to become Americans.

We believe our government should provide a pathway to permanent legal status and/or citizenship for eligible Dreamers. The fact that so many immigrants are in a state of limbo is evidence both political parties have failed for decades to develop and implement sound immigration policy. A proper and just solution will bring our neighbors out of the shadows of civic life, cultivate the stability of families, and provide the opportunity to work legally. Such provisions not only serve the interests of Dreamers, but are foundational for the flourishing of our communities.

We believe a just government works to maintain the integrity of families. God has ordained the family as the foundational institution of human society and that children are a blessing from the Lord. Broken families, wherever they are found, put women and children at risk and increase likelihood of poverty and crime—as well as the likelihood of dependence on government programs. Policymakers must therefore prioritize and uphold the role of the family when addressing immigration policy.

The time for doing nothing is long expired. Both political parties are guilty of failing to enforce immigration policy and perpetuating the status quo to the detriment of both U.S. citizens and undocumented immigrants. It is now incumbent on members of both parties to set politics aside for the sake of our nation, its families, and its communities and pass a legislative solution for Dreamers.

*Please note that the title and institution listed for each signatory is used for identification purposes only and does not necessarily constitute an official endorsement by the institution.

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