



September 5, 2017

Dear Members of Congress:

The National Task Force to End Sexual and Domestic Violence (NTF)\* urges Congress to respect and protect the recipients of the Deferred Action for Child Arrivals (DACA) program. We ask that you support bipartisan legislation to provide legal status as well as a permanent pathway to citizenship for the hundreds of thousands of undocumented immigrants who came here as children with their families, and call the United States home.

We are alarmed by the significant detrimental impact of the Trump Administration's announcement today that it plans to rescind the DACA program. Without congressional action to enact legislation in a timely manner, DACA recipients will be forced to live their lives in constant fear that they will be deported at any moment and separated from their families and communities. The NTF calls on our national policymakers to work together to forge a bi-partisan, humane national immigration policy that furthers the commitment we all made when the Violence Against Women Act was passed and then reauthorized. No legislator willingly works against supporting victims of violence or preventing and ending domestic and sexual assault. That is why we encourage you to work together to craft immigration relief that prevents future abuse and exploitation, promotes public trust, and makes communities safer.

Since its inception in 2012, DACA has provided nearly 800,000 young people in the United States the opportunity to pursue an education, obtain work authorization, start small businesses, serve in the military, and make significant contributions to their communities. In order to be granted DACA, these young people passed extensive background checks and were required to be enrolled in school, graduate from high school, or serve in the armed forces for our country. DACA recipients are fully integrated and essential members of our communities – we only need to look to those on the front lines responding to Hurricane Harvey to see their valuable contributions to our country.

Advocates for survivors of sexual assault and domestic violence have reported that DACA and other forms of immigration relief are critical to protecting our communities and helping survivors feel secure and stable so that they can rebuild their lives and be economically self-sufficient.<sup>i</sup> A recent survey of more than 700 advocates and attorneys revealed that immigrant survivors of domestic violence and sexual assault are often afraid to come forward and access help.<sup>ii</sup> Safeguarding DACA and other immigration relief will protect individuals from deportation and allow survivors and witnesses of

crimes like domestic violence, sexual assault, and human trafficking to feel safe to report crimes to police without fear that seeking justice will put them at risk of being deported.

Further, an estimated 685,000 DACA recipients are legally employed in and contributing to the United States economy.<sup>iii</sup> If DACA is allowed to lapse and Congress fails to authorize immigration reform that provides these undocumented immigrants a path to legal immigration status, hundreds of thousands of individuals will be at greater risk of exploitation and abuse at work, local economies will suffer, and our nation will lose over 433 billion in GDP over the next decade.<sup>iv</sup> Low wages and wage theft, as well as unsafe working conditions—including sexual harassment and violence and human trafficking—are rife in many low-wage industries that employ high numbers of undocumented immigrants.

Access to work authorization, driver's licenses, and education—opportunities available through DACA—also increase a survivor's economic independence. In one survey, three quarters of women in abusive relationships reported staying with their partner for economic reasons.<sup>v</sup> A driver's license provides a means of access to jobs, vocational programs, and other educational opportunities, and decreases the ability of abusers to control and exploit immigrant survivors. Work authorization increases immigrant survivors' economic security, helps survivors support their families, and helps grow and support the economy of our nation.

It is long past time for Congress to protect and defend DACA recipients who were brought to this country as children and are now living, working, and raising families in the United States. The Dream Act of 2017 would grant legal status to young people who arrived in the United States before they turned 18, allowing individuals the opportunity to live and work in the United States permanently. We urge Congress to support the bipartisan Dream Act of 2017 (H.R. 3440 and S. 1615), to defend the 800,000 DACA recipients who have contributed to and made the United States their home, and to enact policies that strengthen families and communities. We also urge you to continue to work in a bipartisan manner towards the larger legislative reform of our nation's immigration laws that is desperately needed to provide a just, common sense, and humane solution to the current crisis.

\*The NTF is comprised of national, state, tribal, territorial and local leadership organizations and advocates working to end domestic violence, sexual assault, dating violence, and stalking.

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<sup>i</sup> National Latin@ Network Casa de Esperanza, "Testimonies From the Field: Benefits of DACA for Survivors of Domestic and Sexual Violence," available at [https://nationallatinonetwork.org/images/files/Quote\\_Sheet\\_for\\_Hill\\_Visits\\_2.pdf](https://nationallatinonetwork.org/images/files/Quote_Sheet_for_Hill_Visits_2.pdf)

<sup>ii</sup> "2017 Advocate and Legal Service Survey Regarding Immigrant Survivors", available at <http://www.tahirih.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/2017-Advocate-and-Legal-Service-Survey-Key-Findings.pdf>

<sup>iii</sup> Center for American Progress, "A New Threat to DACA Could Cost States Billions of Dollars", available at <https://www.americanprogress.org/issues/immigration/news/2017/07/21/436419/new-threat-daca-cost-states-billions-dollars/>

<sup>iv</sup> National Latin@ Network Casa de Esperanza, "Testimonies From the Field: Benefits of DACA for Survivors of Domestic and Sexual Violence," available at [https://nationallatinonetwork.org/images/files/Quote\\_Sheet\\_for\\_Hill\\_Visits\\_2.pdf](https://nationallatinonetwork.org/images/files/Quote_Sheet_for_Hill_Visits_2.pdf)

<sup>v</sup> Mary Kay Foundation, "Truth About Abuse Survey Report", 2012, available at <http://content2.marykayintouch.com/Public/MKACF/Documents/2012survey.pdf>