

Following Court decision on DACA, U.S. bishops' Migration chairman renews plea for Congress to provide legislative solution

WASHINGTON – In early October 2022, the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Fifth Circuit issued its decision in *Texas v. United States*, affirming a lower court's ruling that deemed the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program to be unlawful. The decision comes after the Biden Administration appealed a July 2021 decision that has halted adjudication of all new DACA applications and threatens protection for current beneficiaries. The appellate court's decision returns the case to the district court to consider the impact of regulations published by the Department of Homeland Security on August 30 to codify the program.

DACA, which was implemented in 2012, allows certain undocumented individuals who were brought to the United States as children — commonly known as “Dreamers” — to remain in the country. The current DACA population includes nearly 600,000 active recipients, with over 80,000 first-time applications sitting unprocessed. DACA does not provide beneficiaries with legal status or create a pathway to citizenship, but it does offer temporary protection from removal and eligibility to apply for work authorization.

In response to the decision, Bishop Mario E. Dorsonville, auxiliary bishop of Washington and chairman of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops' (USCCB) Committee on Migration, stated:

“In light of this troubling development, we reaffirm our solidarity with the Dreamers of this country whose lives and futures once again hang in the balance. We implore Congress, Republicans and Democrats alike, to provide a permanent solution for all Dreamers out of respect for their God-given dignity. Until we have that solution, each new challenge to the DACA program creates further uncertainty and anguish for hundreds of thousands of people and their families. Dreamers are integral members of our communities. For many, the United States is the only home they know. But despite their daily contributions to the welfare of our nation, Dreamers are not afforded the same liberties as their native-born neighbors. This is a grave injustice unbecoming a moral society, and it must be remedied without further delay.”

There are currently multiple bills pending before the U.S. Congress that would provide permanent relief to Dreamers, including the American Dream and Promise Act (H.R. 6) and the Dream Act (S. 264), both of which have been endorsed by the USCCB. The need for congressional action on this matter is just one in a series of issues demonstrating the necessity of

comprehensive immigration reform, as underscored by the USCCB's Administrative Committee in March.