



CITY OF HOUSTON

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June 28, 2019

United States House of Representatives
U.S. Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Members of the 116th Congress:

We, as members of the Houston City Council, write to urge you to provide commonsense legislation to create permanent protections for those under the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program – also known as Dreamers – and the Temporary Protected Status (TPS) program. Doing so would prevent the separation of approximately five million U.S. citizen children, two million Dreamers and hundreds of thousands of children of TPS families from the economic, physical, educational, and spiritual support of their parents.

As you are aware, President Obama’s administration issued executive orders which provided the deferral of deportation and the provision of work permissions for undocumented individuals brought to this country as minors, and which also provided the same deferrals of deportation and working permissions to undocumented parents of U.S. citizen children. The authorities used discretion to defer such deportations to prevent the separation of families until the Congress could arrive at a permanent solution.

We believe that the provisions previously adopted, to protect the rights of children to have the support of their parents, represented a just and much-needed temporary adjustment and should be restored by an act of Congress. The children of those undocumented workers, who came and worked honestly in this country, formed families, and raised children, are the least culpable and the most vulnerable victims of the system of undocumented labor. They are being forced every day to endure the unimaginable pain and damage of family separation.

Unfortunately, many of those parents with U.S. citizen children, who were given protected status through prosecutorial discretion and who reported regularly to ICE as they were required, are now subject to deportation. There has been a drastic increase over the last two years in deportations of those with no criminal records, most of whom have families and young children. And just in recent days, this administration has warned that it will step up efforts to increase arrests and deportations.

Furthermore, at least 325,000 Salvadorans, Nicaraguans, Hondurans, and Haitians have lived in this country — and many in our city — for several years and have established families with 273,000 U.S.-born citizen children. Many children brought here at an early age (22% of original entrants were under 16), and who have known no other country, now face the cancellation of TPS and deportation. We believe policies in those countries have contributed to the continuing, and still-existing, conditions of instability, poverty, and violence to which these children of TPS families should not, morally, be returned to endure.

Therefore, the signed members of the Houston City Council urge Congress to pass legislation to create permanent protections for those under the DACA and TPS programs. We ask you to create a process whereby the undocumented parents of U.S. citizen children or DACA-eligible children and TPS recipient parents with U.S. citizen children can apply for a visa that allows them and their children to stay and work legally in this country. We further urge that those visas and work permits be issued on proof that there are no serious criminal convictions of these individuals and proof of their residency in the U.S.

The City of Houston is the most ethnically diverse city in our country. Our residents proudly hail from every corner of the world but, above all, they call themselves Houstonians and we welcome them as our neighbors. They are proud, hardworking people who are driving economic growth not just in Houston but in communities across our country. That is why we stand united in our request to Congress to adopt sensible legislation that provides stability for our undocumented neighbors, DACA and TPS recipients.

Respectfully,



Sylvester Turner
Mayor



Ellen Cohen
Mayor Pro Tem
Council Member, District C



Jerry Davis
Vice Mayor Pro Tem
Council Member, District B




Dwight Boykins
Council Member, District D



Karla Cisneros
Council Member, District H



Robert Gallegos
Council Member, District I



Mike Laster
Council Member, District J



Martha Castex-Tatum
Council Member, District K



David Robinson
Council Member, At-large Position 2