



CATHOLIC DIOCESE OF LEXINGTON

THE CATHOLIC CENTER
OFFICE OF THE BISHOP

September 7, 2017

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Throughout the terms of various presidential administrations the Catholic Church in the United States has been calling for and working for comprehensive immigration reform. The broken immigration system is unjust and not beneficial to anyone; an approach that only emphasizes the enforcement of unjust laws contributes to the great suffering of a very vulnerable population. While the Church teaches that nations have a right to control their borders, that right is presented not as an absolute right; basic human rights take precedence. Comprehensive immigration reform would expand the opportunities for hard-working people and families to come to this country and contribute to its prosperity just as previous generations of immigrants have done. The Church advocates for the dignity of the human person, for the inalienable rights that come from being children of God, for the unification of families, and for the integration of immigrants in the larger society. The unwillingness and inability to accomplish comprehensive immigration reform in our nation is unacceptable and always penalizes the most vulnerable.

The current administration's cancellation of the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) is the latest consequence of this refusal to enact comprehensive immigration reform and places an enormous and unfair burden upon young people who had no say about the circumstances of their arrival in this country. There is broad consensus about what the "dreamers" contribute to society and the Church is particularly grateful and appreciative of their presence among us.

The statement from the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops states it well and forcefully: The cancellation of the DACA program is reprehensible. It causes unnecessary fear for DACA youth and their families. These youth entered the U.S. as minors and often know America as their only home. The Catholic Church has long watched with pride and admiration as DACA youth live out their daily lives with hope and a determination to flourish and contribute to society: continuing to work and provide for their families, continuing to serve in the military, and continuing to receive and education. Now, after months of anxiety and fear about their futures, these brave young people face deportation. This decision is unacceptable and does not reflect who we are as Americans. [Full statement available at www.usccb.org]

Now it is time for people of faith to act. We must insist on comprehensive immigration reform which provides a legal path for those who come to work and contribute to the continuous building up of our nation. We need to contact our congressional representatives and senators and urge them to provide legal protection for the nearly 800,000 young people who participate in DACA. We also need to be insistent about the need for comprehensive immigration reform. Scapegoating the vulnerable and building a wall are not the strategies that we need. Let us recall the message of Lady Liberty in the New York harbor, holding a torch and inviting those with dreams of new opportunities to this land. Generations of immigrants have made America great, new arrivals wish to contribute to this greatness. More importantly, let us recall the frequent admonition of our scriptures to welcome the stranger and not oppress the alien.

Peace and all good,

Most Reverend John Stowe, OFM Conv.
Bishop of Lexington