

## Defending the Dream: With DACA in peril, what can you do?

**The Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program has transformed the lives of nearly 800,000 young people, including more than 8,000 Massachusetts residents. Now, with DACA kept alive only by litigation in federal courts, Congress must step to protect Dreamers permanently.**

Established by President Obama in 2012, DACA has allowed hundreds of thousands of young undocumented immigrants to live and work legally in the U.S., subject to renewal every two years. To qualify, you had to be undocumented; have arrived in the U.S. prior to your 16th birthday; have lived continuously in the U.S. since June 15, 2007; be in school or have graduated, obtained a GED, or been honorably discharged from the military; and have no serious criminal record.<sup>i</sup>

An estimated 1.3 million people met those criteria as of August 2018, and about 400,000 more could meet them once they turned 15 or completed educational requirements. In Massachusetts, about 19,000 people were eligible, and another 4,000 could qualify in the future.<sup>ii</sup>

For those who obtained DACA, it was life-changing, making it possible to get a driver's license for the first time; pursue an education (with in-state tuition at Massachusetts public colleges and universities); start a career; obtain much-better jobs; travel; and fully participate in their communities.

But in September 2017, President Trump announced he would end DACA within six months. He called on Congress to find a long-term solution for Dreamers, but the White House and nativists in Congress repeatedly sabotaged negotiations. Simultaneously, several lawsuits were filed in federal courts, and U.S. District Court judges have issued injunctions blocking the termination of DACA. As a result, since late January 2018, U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) has continued to accept DACA renewal applications. The Trump administration had asked the U.S. Supreme Court to step in and decide the fate of DACA once and for all, but the Court will not be taking up the issue before fall 2019.

In the meantime, advocates have strongly encouraged DACA recipients to renew their status, even as they continue to fight for permanent residency and a path to citizenship. Fear and other factors had led DACA enrollment to fall in Massachusetts even before September 2017, to about 5,900. Nationwide, the vast majority of DACA recipients have kept renewing, but the total number of active DACA holders has dropped, from a post-injunction peak of 704,000 in July 2018 to 687,000 as of December 2018. Nearly 5,000 Dreamers with pending renewals have seen their DACA expire, leaving them exposed.<sup>iii</sup>

MIRA stands firmly with Dreamers in their push for recognition as full-fledged Americans, and we are committed to supporting DACA recipients to ensure they keep their protections active.

### What can you do if you have DACA?

- **Renew, renew, renew!** If your status is set to expire before 2019, get started on your renewal ASAP, even more if it's expiring within a few months. If you need help with the application, MIRA will support you for free; email [citizenship@miracoalition.org](mailto:citizenship@miracoalition.org). We can also help if you can't afford the \$495 fee.

- If you are working, regardless of when your permit expires, read this FAQ to understand your rights and options: [www.nilc.org/issues/daca/about-daca-and-employment/](http://www.nilc.org/issues/daca/about-daca-and-employment/).
- If you are enrolled in a Mass. public college or university and paying in-state tuition as a DACA recipient, be aware that you'll continue to qualify for in-state tuition even if you lose your DACA – but only if you remain continuously enrolled *in that particular school*. Several private universities give favorable treatment to undocumented students. Explore all options!
- Whatever your situation, make sure you know your rights! You can find pocket cards, detailed explainers and posters here: [www.miracoalition.org/know-your-rights](http://www.miracoalition.org/know-your-rights).
- Take care of yourself! The current situation is traumatic, and it may take a toll on your mental health. Find a group of supportive peers (especially the Student Immigrant Movement, [www.simforus.org](http://www.simforus.org)), and take advantage of any services offered by your school. United We Dream also has a mental health toolkit: [weareheretostay.org/resources/mental-health-emergency-toolkit/](http://weareheretostay.org/resources/mental-health-emergency-toolkit/).
- To connect with the national movement to pass the DREAM Act, and also find more great resources, go to [WeAreHeretoStay.org](http://WeAreHeretoStay.org), from United We Dream. To join MIRA's advocacy in Massachusetts, like us on Facebook [www.facebook.com/MIRACoalition](http://www.facebook.com/MIRACoalition) and join our email list: [bit.ly/MIRA-mail](http://bit.ly/MIRA-mail).

### **What can you do to support Dreamers?**

- Call your members of Congress (especially your Representative) and tell them to make Dreamers a priority. A clean DREAM Act is the “gold standard,” ensuring that *all* young immigrants who fit the DACA profile are protected and on the path to citizenship. Other options may include a solution for DACA and Temporary Protected Status (TPS) holders together, or a DACA deal as part of a larger immigration package. However, MIRA stands firm with Dreamers in opposing any attempt to use them as pawns in an effort to fund a border wall, step up enforcement, or further restrict immigration.
- Contribute to MIRA's DACA Renewal Fund, which covers the \$495 renewal fee for Dreamers who can't afford it: <https://miracoalition.kindful.com/?campaign=349287>.
- Join our campaign for the Safe Communities Act, to ensure *all* young people and families feel safe and welcome in Massachusetts: [www.miracoalition.org/safe-communities](http://www.miracoalition.org/safe-communities).
- Support the **Unafraid Scholarship**, a project of the Unafraid Educators in partnership with MIRA. In its first two years, we've raised and awarded more than \$100,000 to dozens of Boston students (DACA recipients and others). To learn more and contribute, go to [bit.ly/UnafraidCollege](http://bit.ly/UnafraidCollege).
- Join the nationwide efforts of United We Dream, an advocacy organization led by Dreamers; go to [WeAreHeretoStay.org](http://WeAreHeretoStay.org) to take action right now.

*This factsheet was written by Marion Davis. It was last updated on January 25, 2019.*

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<sup>i</sup> <https://www.uscis.gov/archive/consideration-deferred-action-childhood-arrivals-daca>

<sup>ii</sup> <https://www.migrationpolicy.org/programs/data-hub/deferred-action-childhood-arrivals-daca-profiles>

<sup>iii</sup> <https://www.americanprogress.org/issues/immigration/news/2019/01/23/465370/supreme-court-declines-take-trump-administrations-daca-challenge-now/>