Catholic Leaders Call on Secretary Kelly to Protect DACA Students

Dear Secretary Kelly:

As leaders of Catholic colleges and universities, we are dedicated to educating students from all backgrounds. In keeping with this commitment, many of our institutions are home to young men and women who are undocumented and have met the criteria for Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA). We are deeply concerned about the futures of our undocumented students.

Last November, presidents of Catholic colleges and universities made a pledge in support of DACA and our undocumented students. We remain committed to supporting our students as they face legal and financial uncertainties. The DACA policy has enabled our students to continue their studies and pursue careers in their chosen fields, from education to medicine, despite great anxiety and uncertainty. The academic year will conclude in May, and many of these students will leave our campuses for internships, summer programs and jobs. Our prayer is that they return.

While the DACA policy remains in place, expanded immigration enforcement priorities have led to the detention of at least 10 DACA holders who have not committed a criminal offense that would compromise their DACA eligibility. Attorneys and advocates have reported that at least one DACA-protected young man was deported. In addition, recent actions and statements by Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) about young people who met the DACA criteria raise many questions about the safety of our students.
The implementation of immigration enforcement policies falls under your discretion. We respectfully request a meeting with you to better understand how enforcement agencies are approaching DACA holders. We would like to better understand how immigration enforcement agencies in the Department of Homeland Security, including ICE and Customs and Border Patrol (CBP), approach DACA holders during targeted enforcement actions, police encounters or in public. The statements from ICE regarding the detentions and deportations of DACA holders have alarmed us and our students.

A statement on Twitter from the official ICE account read: “DACA is not a protected legal status, but active DACA recipients are typically a lower level of enforcement priority.”

As Catholics, our shared faith calls us to protect the most vulnerable among us. Over the years, we have opened the doors of our colleges and universities to “Dreamers” and advocated for comprehensive immigration reform so that they and their families can live safe, full lives in our country. In these uncertain times, we will continue to do everything we can to protect our students, and we urge you to join us in this pursuit.

Sincerely,

Thomas Curran, SJ
Rockhurst University

Timothy Lenchak
Divine Word College

Moya Dittmeier
Conference for Mercy Higher Education

Candace Introcaso
La Roche College

Arturo Chavez
Mexican American Catholic College

Michael Galligan-Stierle
Association of Catholic Colleges and Universities
Kevin Wildes, S.J.
Loyola University New Orleans

Thomas Kunkel
St. Norbert College

Peg Albert
Siena Heights University

Dennis Holtschneider
DePaul University

Jim Collins
Loras College

John Smarrelli
Christian Brothers University

Stephen Privett
University of San Francisco

Michael E. Engh, S.J.
Santa Clara University

Stephen V. Sundborg, S.J.
Seattle University

Lynn Babington
Fairfield University

Michael J. Graham, S.J.
Xavier University

Timothy Law Snyder
Loyola Marymount University
Christopher P. Puto
Spring Hill College

Patricia McGuire
Trinity Washington University

Eugene Cornacchia
Saint Peter's University

Joseph McShane, S.J.
Fordham University

Peter Donohue, OSA
Villanova University

Mary Reap, IHM
Elms College

Diane Steele
University of Saint Mary

Ronald Slepitza
Avila University

Nancy Blattner
Caldwell University

Eric Spina
University of Dayton

Antoinette Hays
Regis College

Mary Meehan
Seton Hall University
Brian J. Shanley, O.P.
Providence College

Sister Patricia Fadden
Immaculata University

Michael Brophy
Benedictine University

ReBecca Roloff
St. Catherine University

Bernard Ploeger, S.M.
Chaminade University of Honolulu

Matt Shank
Marymount University

Maryanne Stevens, RSM
College of Saint Mary

Anthony Aretz
University of Great Falls

Michael Pressimone
Fontbonne University

Anne Kilbride
Albertus Magnus College

Linda Bevilacqua, OP, PhD
Barry University

James Dlugos
Saint Joseph's College
John Denning, C.S.C.
Stonehill College

Diane Melby
Our Lady of the Lake University

Thomas Mengler
St. Mary's University

Michael Hemesath
Saint John's University

Paul Fitzgerald, S.J.
University of San Francisco

Mary Ann Gawelek
Lourdes University

Arvid Johnson
University of St. Francis

Ezequiel Peña
Our Lady of the Lake University

Reynold Verret
Xavier University of Louisiana

Larry Hostetter
Brescia University

Thayne McCulloh
Gonzaga University

H. James Williams
Mount St. Joseph University
Donald Taylor
Cabrini University

Brennan O'Donnell
Manhattan College

Mary Persico
Marywood University

Margaret Huber
Presentation College

Maureen McGarrity
Holy Family University

Helen Streubert
College of Saint Elizabeth

Juan Olivarez
Aquinas College

Scott Flanagan
Edgewood College

John Garvey
Catholic University of America

Michael Lovell
Marquette University

Monsignor Stuart Swetland
Donnelly College

Dr. Donna M. Carroll
Dominican University